MIDSHIPMAN DAYS

ROGER WEST

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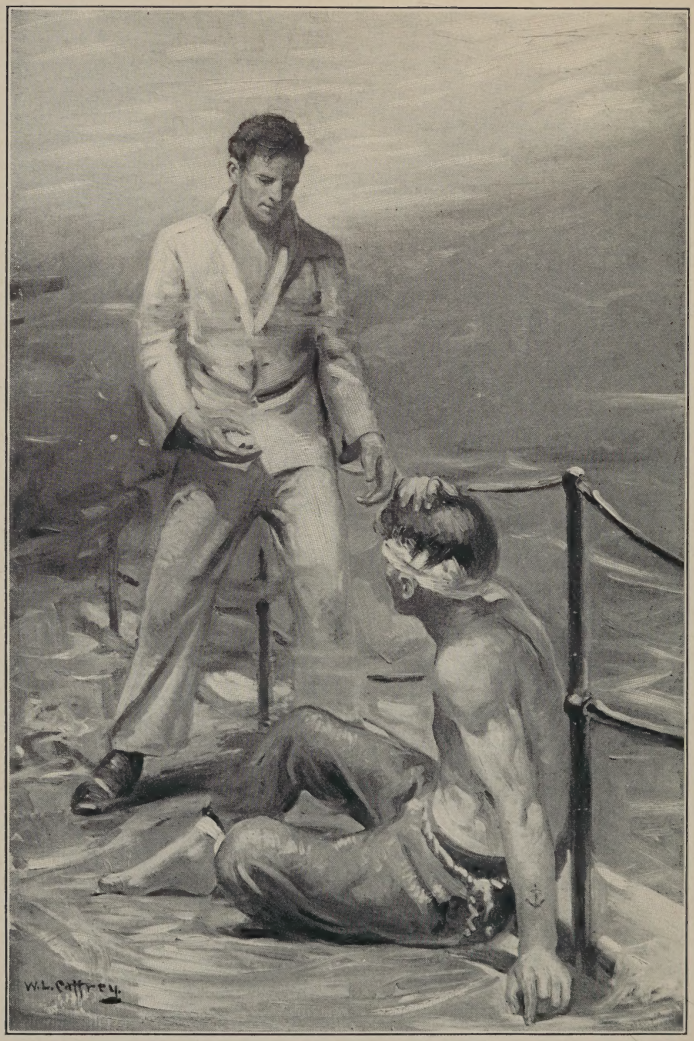

NO ONE OF THE RESCUERS WAS MORE EAGER AND ACTIVE THAN GEFF (p. 175)

MIDSHIPMAN DAYS

By ROGER WEST

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1913

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Published September 1913

TO MY FATHER

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MIDSHIPMAN DAYS

CHAPTER I

CANDIDATES

"Mr. McIntosh, have you worked out those problems I gave you?"

The speaker was "Tommy" Rudd, of Rudd's Preparatory School in Annapolis.

"No, sir," replied the boy, looking up with perplexed, large, honest eyes. "I am afraid I don't quite understand the principle."

"Then, Mr. McIntosh," suggested the coach, "I think I may say that if you do not succeed soon in mastering it and numerous others in your arithmetic, you may as well make up your mind that there is no chance of your entering the Navy."

The air, heavy with the fragrance of roses and syringa, was not conducive to mental vigor, and the languid students envied the idlers strolling in the street below.

"Mr. Ledyard," said "Tommy" (as he was familiarly called by his pupils), speaking in the satiric tone which so irritated the boys, "will you be kind enough to turn your attention from the flora and fauna of Maryland and inform me what bodies of water you would traverse in going from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the Indian Ocean via the Suez Canal?"

Mr. Ledyard, aged sixteen, diverted his gaze reluctantly from the open window, through which he had been idly watching the bees and butterflies darting about the old-fashioned garden with its high wall of time-darkened brick, and began: "Gulf of St. Lawrence—" until, having safely passed some reefs of uncertainty, he reached his far-off haven.

Blake McIntosh heard nothing of what was going on about him. He was too much discouraged by the coach's words and his own difficulty in getting the better of mathematical problems to have a thought for anything else. He sat there, head in his hands, until the figures became blurred; and even when Tommy

sat down and tried to explain to him, his mind seemed unable to grasp what he said.

After dinner at his boarding-house he went out for a solitary walk. His heart was heavy at the thought of his probable failure to pass the coming examinations. It was Saturday, and he longed to enter the Academy grounds, where the band was playing and midshipmen were walking about with their girl friends; but the unwritten law forbidding a candidate to wander at will through his still unwon realm kept him away.

So he strolled aimlessly down Duke of Gloucester Street, with no eyes for the quaintness of its houses, past the Roman Catholic church and the terraced garden, to the bridge that crossed the Spa, until he found himself on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay spread out sparkling before him.

The son and grandson of naval officers, Blake had grown up with the idea that there was but one road in all the world for him, but one possible profession. His boyhood had been

spent in navy yards; his playthings had been boats; his library, "Robinson Crusoe," Marryat, and the tales of naval heroes. Now the bay with its brightness mocked him. What did he care for the land and its flowers behind him? One whiff of salty air, one sight of a far-off sail was worth more to him than all the gardens and manor houses in the world!

Blake clenched his hands together. If he failed in his examination, as he probably would, there was nothing for him but the life of a landlubber. "I will not, I will not!" he cried, aloud, frightening with his vehemence a low-flying gull; "I'll ship before the mast first!"

The examinations were only five days off. He counted over the subjects, balancing his chances: spelling, good; geography — why, he knew the coast line and seaports of every country on the map, had known them for years, and his two months' cramming had filled in the far less important inland cities, mountains, and rivers; grammar, not bad. He had no fear of

the physical examination; he swelled out his sturdy chest and felt his well-developed muscles. Then, there was only one weak point — arithmetic! How he reproached himself for his neglect of that study until now!

What was there left for him in life if he failed? he asked himself. There was scarcely enough money for a college course; therefore, unless he carried out his threat of enlisting, there was nothing but a business life, and he knew he had no talents in that direction. With no regular home, and consequently no political friends, there was little chance of securing another appointment. It had been almost a miracle that his father had got this one, by a simple, direct appeal to the President, who, a believer in inherited adaptability to a profession, had sent certain influential Congressmen away empty-handed to give the appointment to Blake.

The thought of his father, cruising in the Pacific, made Blake pace nervously up and down the narrow beach, picturing what his

disappointment would be. There was no mother to consider. The travels from north to south and east to west had proved too severe a strain on her delicate constitution, and after her death Blake during his father's cruises had lived at boarding-school or with relatives.

Hearing a step behind him, he turned instinctively, almost angry at the intrusion, and feeling as if his unhappiness must be written on his face for all to read. He saw a boy, older than himself, whom he recognized as a new arrival at the house where he was staying. He had noticed him the evening before and had taken a dislike to him. He was too good-looking, Blake thought, too much at ease with some of the young girls who had come down for the festivities of June Week, and he had watched him stroll that morning unconcernedly through the forbidden gates of the Academy.

"Pretty little town this, is n't it?" said the newcomer, unconscious or unwilling to notice that Blake was apparently not in the mood for

society. "There's something about that garden at the foot of the street, with its terraced beds and rows of iris, and the black-robed priests wandering about, which reminds me of Italy. I was just thinking that I should come and sketch it some day when I have time."

Italy! sketch! — the words and the manner in which they were spoken, the careless elegance in the speaker's attitude and clothes — all aroused a strong animosity in Blake. Yet he could not refuse a reply to a perfectly civil speech.

"Are you a candidate?" he asked; "have you come here ahead to coach?"

"Yes to the former question, no to the other," replied the tall youth. "I imagine that one who has succeeded in passing the exams for Yale is not likely to fail here."

In all his life Blake had rarely wished anything so much as he now wished that this boaster might share the fate which had befallen others before him who, too confident,

had undervalued a thorough grounding in elementary studies.

"Were you at Yale, then?" he asked, skimming an oyster shell across the water.

"Oh, yes," replied the other in an offhand sort of manner, seeing that Blake was impressed in spite of himself. "I was the youngest man in my class, but the faculty did not agree with my theory of the rights of an individual; consequently I left a few months ago — expelled you might call it if you prefer."

"And what are you doing here?" asked Blake, who could not help being interested. "Do you imagine for a moment that discipline is less strict in the Academy than at Yale?"

"That point I will confess never occurred to me," answered the other lightly, sitting down on a stone and making letters in the sand with his cane. "In fact, I have the very vaguest idea of what lies ahead of me. And I am not particularly anxious to raise the veil too soon; mystery has a charm, you know. Of course, if I should find that I had made a

mistake, there's not much trouble getting out again, I imagine."

Again Blake could scarcely resist an impulse to punch him. "Get out!" he cried involuntarily; "you talk of getting out when I would give my very head to be sure I was going to get in!"

Then, angry at having shown so much emotion before a stranger, and one, moreover, to whom he felt antagonistic, he said abruptly, —

"Good-bye, I've got to go back and 'bone.'"

"Hold up there, McIntosh," cried the other, walking after him; "my name's Summers, Geoffrey Summers. Let's go back together; and see here," he added, his voice losing its careless mocking tone, "are you afraid of the exams? Don't mind my asking. I can see something's troubling you."

"Yes, I am," said Blake; "but what makes you want to know?"

"What subjects?"

"Arithmetic. It means so much to me if — if — I — should n't —" and then a sympa-

thetic look in Geoffrey's eye made him forget his first impression and he blurted out all the worries he had bravely kept bottled up for days in his boyish heart.

"Now, look here, McIntosh," said Geoffrey, when he had finished, "time is going to hang heavy on my hands for the next five days. The girls will have nothing to do with me the moment they see a brass button glistening around the corner. I won't play second fiddle; I'm too fond of being first violin. I suppose you will think I am boasting, but really I must have been sent into the world especially to disprove the theory that a talent for languages is never found combined with one for mathematics. I am really good at arithmetic, and I believe I could explain your difficulties to you better than your old coach. Will you let me try?"

Blake felt the genuineness of the offer.

"Will I!" he exclaimed; "will I catch at any straw that will keep me from failing? I say, it's good of you, Summers, but you'll find me beastly dull."

However, that evening Blake began to wonder if he were really as stupid as his coach had made him believe himself, or whether it was that Geoffrey not only understood his subject completely, but was able to explain it as no one had ever done before.

"I'm eternally grateful to you, Summers," said Blake, shaking his hand vigorously as he bade him good-night.

"Oh, cut that!" exclaimed his youthful tutor; "but if you really find me a satisfactory teacher and are up in your other subjects, why don't you quit Tommy's now, and let us give all your time to arithmetic? It will keep me out of mischief, too."

After a moment's hesitation, Blake consented, and for the rest of the days devoted himself to strengthening his defenses at their weakest point. By the end of that time he and Geoffrey had become as intimate as old friends.

CHAPTER II

FUNCTIONS

At last the dreaded examinations were a thing of the past and a hundred or more boys waited anxiously to know the result. Now that the strain was over, they began to take more interest in each other. There were boys from the coasts, and boys from the inland who had never seen any larger body of water than a river; boys who had always looked forward to entering the Navy, like Blake, and a more numerous class who had never given it a thought until an appointment had come to them, thus deciding their future; and others who had won their chance in competitive examinations in their own states. And now this picked lot would begin to be weeded out until only the fittest, mentally and physically, survived.

Geoffrey was not troubled with doubts as to his papers; Blake, on the contrary, felt con-

vinced that he had failed in everything. He tried in vain to remember the answers he had written to the various questions and problems. Yet there were also moments when he had faint hopes. He could scarcely wait for certainty.

He was walking the next afternoon with Geoffrey along Maryland Avenue, drawn as by a magnet toward the gates of the Academy, when he met Lieutenant Raynor, a friend of his father's.

"Is n't this Blake McIntosh?" asked the officer, stopping.

"Yes, sir," replied Blake, shaking hands.

"I have n't seen you for a long time, not since we were together at the Boston Yard. I was glad, though, to hear of your appointment."

"Mr. Raynor," asked Blake shyly, "can you tell me if I have passed?"

"Now, Blake," answered the officer with a frown, which, however, lacked sincerity, "don't you know that if I knew I could n't tell you?"

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"But," suggested the officer, speaking slowly, "I should like you to send a cablegram to your father for me, just the message 'O. K.' He'll understand."

"Thank you, sir," cried Blake, his face lighting up, "thank you."

Lieutenant Raynor smiled as he walked on, thinking of all the troubles ahead of this young bear.

Geoffrey Summers, Blake McIntosh, and Harry Ledyard, a jolly, happy-go-lucky youth, who had been coaching with Blake at "Tommy's," were soon officially notified that they had passed and were now to take the oath of allegiance to the United States Government. The three had reported at the Academy and crossed the Rubicon to naval life. The necessary formalities having been gone through, they were housed on the Santee. The old frigate Santee, shorn of her masts, roofed over like a Noah's Ark and anchored to the wharf, was the abode of the "functions" — as the newcomers are called for the few days inter-

vening between their arrival and the graduation of the first class, when they are promoted to "plebes."

The three youths looked at themselves and each other as they were being marched up to the main quarters for dinner formation. All had cast aside their "cits'" garments and wore the working suits of white duck and small white hats. Their hair had been closely clipped, and the stiffness of new boots and unwashed cotton made their movements awkward.

"We're a pretty looking lot of convicts, aren't we?" said Harry, grinning. "Summers is the worst; he's lost that Parisian air which marked him as above the common herd, and looks now as meek as Moses."

"At least, my suit fits, which is more than yours does," retorted Geoffrey.

"Silence in ranks!" called out the upperclassman who had charge of them.

"Silence yourself!" exclaimed Geff, almost loud enough to be heard.

"Be quiet!" whispered Blake, imploringly.

Not a day had gone by before Geoffrey decided that he had made the greatest mistake of his life. Never before had he come in contact with real discipline, and here he was in a place where there was no escape from it for a single moment. His rich, widowed mother, pleasure-loving and a semi-invalid, had been proud of her son's intelligence and talents, and had always taken more interest in forming his manners than his character. Now when the bugle blew in the morning, Geff did not get up immediately, and hence demerits showered upon him; he looked straight into the face of a cadet officer when he was spoken to, instead of modestly keeping his eyes on the ground, and was instructed in no gentle terms in regard to the custom. It was drill here, go there, do this, don't do that, until he felt like a squirrel in a cage. He looked to his two chums for sympathy, but Blake took it all as a matter of course; Harry as a joke.

The gayety of June Week was not for functions. Only from afar might they watch the

drills and races and listen to the band as it played for the graduation hop. But even though they beheld only the outside of the festivities, Blake, at least, felt himself a part of the Academy life and shouted "Rah! Rah! Rah! Na-vy!" at the boat-races as lustily as a first-classman.

The summer cruise began, the day after graduation. Geff welcomed the thought of it, as he was a good sailor and anxious to see Madeira, for which they were bound. Harry Ledyard, however, inland-born, was worrying about the initiation he was likely to go through.

"Seasickness often comes from an empty stomach," explained his mother, who was sitting that evening beside him on the railing of the wharf, occupied all its length at short intervals by midshipmen and relatives come for a farewell talk. "So May and I have brought you a box of things to eat. There's fruitcake, crackers, cheese, chocolate, a bottle of lime-juice, and a dozen oranges."

"Thank you, mother," said Harry; "but where do you suppose I can stow them all? My locker now is filled up with my clothes and those of a second-classman."

"Why did you take his?"

"Because he told me to; you can't reason with an upper-classman, mother."

This imposition to which her boy must submit was the last straw to Mrs. Ledyard's tried mother spirit, and she besought him then and there to inform the captain immediately that he had reconsidered his foolish decision of becoming a naval officer and was going back with her to Kentucky to raise tobacco.

But in spite of these entreaties, Harry was not missing when the Monongahela, one of the last sailing-ships in the service, started off next morning amid tears and laughter and waving of handkerchiefs, bound down the Chesapeake and out between the Capes. As he had feared, he soon discovered what seasickness meant; and Blake and Geoffrey, to their astonishment and disgust, found that tossing about in a

sailing-vessel produced different results from the gentler movement of the ocean liners they had traveled on before. However, they recovered in time to find amusement in Harry's more protracted sufferings and in urging upon him, as he sat with his head in his hands, a meal of pork and molasses.

There was a stiff breeze behind them most of the voyage. The very first evening they were ordered aloft to furl the sail, as a thunderstorm was upon them. Blake climbed up the rigging as rapidly as a monkey and swung on the yard as confidently as if he had been doing it all his life. When he came down again, he found Geoffrey leaning against the mast, trembling.

"What's up, Geff?" he asked; "got a chill?"

"No," he replied curtly, starting to walk away. Then, changing his mind, he came back. "No," he said; "I can't tell you, Blake, I'm — afraid. I could n't climb up that swaying tree to save my life."

"Afraid!" Blake's voice was full of scorn; "a man afraid!"

"Wait, Blake," begged Geff as his comrade turned his back on him; "I might as well confess now as at any other time. Come over here and sit down in the lee; I don't care if it is raining, it's so warm. You'll have to know."

The boys found a quiet spot and Geoffrey began to talk in a quick, nervous manner.

"Yes, I'm a coward and have been all my life. I knew it must be soon discovered. I don't suppose you have any idea what it is to be afraid, have you, Blake?"

"I can't think of anything I'm really afraid of," the other answered.

"You're lucky. You don't know what it is to feel the way I do, to imagine myself falling down from the rigging. Too much imagination is n't a good thing for a man to have unless it's controlled. But my bringing up has n't been like yours. I did n't have a father to cuff or encourage me when I was timid. The only help I've ever had was shame. I've made myself do

things because I was ashamed to have people know that I was a coward. And I'm horribly ashamed now, and I suppose it'll all have to come out; but, Blake, when I get this way, what *am* I to do?"

This direct appeal made Blake thoughtful, and he remembered what he himself owed to his father's training.

"Do you mean," he asked, after a moment's silence, "that you're afraid of everything?"

"Oh, no; only new and unexpected dangers. I've got used to lots of things I used to fear, dogs, guns, and —"

"Then," said Blake decidedly, "the best thing for you is to get used to things as quickly as possible. Do you really want me to help you now?"

Blake was facing a situation which was completely novel to him; he could not comprehend such weakness as Geff's or understand how he could confess it; but he would always feel grateful for the aid Geff had given him with his studies, and he also experienced the

attraction of a personality so different from his own.

"Of course I do; it's hell to feel like this!"

"Then, come here," commanded Blake, getting up and walking to the mast; "come aloft at once without another thought."

Geff, like one hypnotized, got up, and though his hands and legs trembled, climbed slowly up the shrouds in the darkness.

"Faster, this way," cried Blake, ahead of him, as Geff hesitated, feeling helplessly with his foot for a rope which apparently did not exist; "come on still farther; don't look down — up! Here, that'll do."

When they were on deck again he said: —

"Now the worst is over, and you do that every day, whether you have to or not, and by the end of the week you won't mind it at all."

"Thanks," said Geff, breathing hard; "you won't say anything about it, will you, and I'll try to get the better of my nerves."

"Of course not."

After a pause Blake asked: —

"What under the sun ever made you think of entering the Navy, Geff?"

"I did n't. Had no more intention than of being a coal miner. Did it on a bet. When I left Yale, and the appointment to Annapolis was offered me by our Congressman, an old friend of the family, I laughed at the idea. My cousin Millie, who is an awful tease, asked Mr. Saxon if he had n't yet learned to cease trying to put round pegs in square holes and if he thought I could stay even one day in the Naval Academy. 'You're quite mistaken, madam,' I remarked haughtily to her; then I said to Mr. Saxon, 'I will accept your appointment with thanks; and, Miss Millie, I'll not only go to Annapolis, but graduate there.' 'I'll bet you fifty boxes of cigarettes you don't,' she said, laughing in a way that made me wild. 'I bet you fifty pairs of gloves I do,' I replied. Such a fool as I was to let myself be dared into promising to make myself miserable for four years when I might be doing anything I liked! — for I can see what's ahead of me. But

I'll stick it out and graduate just to spite her."

Blake could n't help being amused at the story, and he made up his mind to help Geff keep his word.

No one else suspected Geff's timidity, and he accustomed himself one by one to things which at first terrified him. He even found after a while that he actually enjoyed swinging in the rigging between sea and sky. He, as well as the other plebes, had to endure their share of hazing; but he protested and struggled more than most of them, and consequently was reported for many minor infractions of discipline which the cadet officers overlooked in his more yielding classmates. But he made friends, too, by means of his guitar which he had managed to stow away, and during the tropical evenings when every one was on deck he played and sang, not only with the accompaniment of other voices, but alone.

Blake enjoyed every minute of the day except those spent in study, and devoted much

time to talking to an old sailor who had sailed with his father, and in learning to splice ropes and make every kind of knot. Harry Ledyard, once his seasickness was over, developed such an appetite that his mother's supplies were quickly exhausted, and he could scarcely wait to reach Madeira to get "a square meal."

CHAPTER III

SUMMER CRUISE

"I KNOW just how the sailors with Columbus felt when they first caught sight of land," exclaimed Geff, as the Monongahela was casting anchor in the harbor of Funchal. "Land ho! Those are the most thrilling words that were ever spoken. Somebody ought to have set them to music and we'd all sing the chorus with a will."

As soon as permission was given, the boats carried full loads of middies off, to feel once again "terra cotta" under their feet, as Harry Ledyard expressed it. The little town was bright with brass buttons; and the sellers of inlaid-wood, silver, embroideries and laces did a thriving business. Blake deferred to Geff's superior knowledge, for he did not trust his own taste in such feminine matters, and yet wished to take something home to his aunt.

In jolly parties they climbed up the steep streets and rode over the rough cobblestones in the peculiar Madeira sleds made for that purpose, had dinner at the hotel, and envied the first-classmen who were invited to receptions and dances at the homes of hospitable English residents.

Geff was in his element, acting as interpreter by means of some *lingua franca* which the Portuguese natives seemed to understand, bargaining for purchases in a way that appeared little short of marvelous to those whose shopping experiences were limited to the "one price only" system, finding out points of interest, and piloting his comrades to them. They rode on donkeys up into the mountains — that is, those who still had sufficient money to pay for their steeds; the others accompanied them on foot, making slighting remarks about sailors on horseback.

A week was thus spent at Funchal, and some of the upper-classmen boasted about the impression they had made upon the feminine

population. Two first-classmen, inseparable friends, known as Pete and Daisy, were particularly eloquent in regard to a beautiful young Portuguese girl. They had passed her house several times a day, and had lounged against the opposite wall in what they understood to be the native method of showing admiration for the other sex.

"Did you talk to each other?" asked Blake, to whom, though a plebe, they had deigned to speak of their wooing, as he had been recommended to their tender mercies by an old friend.

"Well — no," admitted Daisy reluctantly; "the street was rather too public a place in the daytime, you see; but if we could only serenade her we'd get the chance."

"Why don't you?" queried Blake.

"Neither of us can sing or play," said Pete ruefully, "unless on a comb or a jew's-harp, and they are scarcely romantic enough."

"I've an idea," cried Blake, chuckling. "Geff Summers can play and sing to beat the band. Make him do it for you."

"That's great!" said the would-be troubadours, seeing the possibilities the plan offered; "we'll do it."

So Geff was summoned and told what was expected of him. He could find nothing distasteful in such a form of hazing, and he was in the best of humors when he met Pete and Daisy at the appointed place that evening. Pete was carrying a large bouquet and Daisy its twin. Even love had not yet been able to cause a rivalry between them! The fair one might, if it pleased her, choose between them, but each should have an even chance to win her.

"Now, plebe," they said to Geff, when they had crept silently to the corner of the house where lived the fair — Dolores, Geff said her name was sure to be. All the street was in darkness except where a light from a lamp made a narrow illuminated lane through the shadows. "We'll all stand where we can't be seen while you sing the best love song in your bunch, and when you're through, we two will

move into the lime light for applause and you can get out."

"All right," assented Geff, in a whisper; "when do you discharge your bombs?"

"Now don't get gay, plebe, just because we honor you by associating with you. One of these bouquets will be thrown at her feet when your dulcet strains bring her to her window, the other will be cast in homage when you finish."

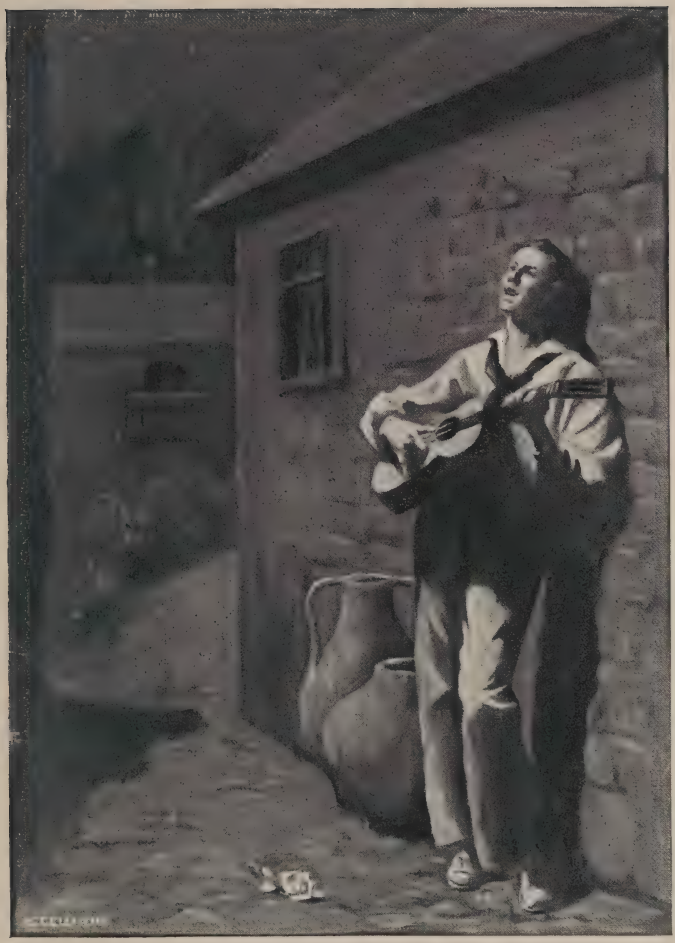
Geff stationed himself where he was bid, striking a couple of preliminary chords, and then played and sang with genuine spirit the "Bedouin's Love Song." As soon as a dim figure approached the window, Pete threw his bouquet with more force than grace. She came forward and leaned out over the sill. He crept nearer, with his back to the wall, until he was just below her and could have reached the hand which rested on a vine encircling the window. He scarcely dared breathe except when a chord on the guitar was loud enough to drown the sound of his respiration. Then — at

first he thought it must be his imagination — but soon he felt distinctly that his hair was being gently fondled. After all, he decided, the girl must have discovered his figure in the shadow, though, of course, she would know that it was not the singer, and meant to show him some sign of favor. He could not turn and face her, nor could he speak — loyalty to Daisy must keep him silent; besides, to tell the truth, he had n't an idea what he ought to say!

Daisy himself was standing exactly on the corner, waiting for his cue to step into the light. The song was nearly finished, and Geff was putting forth his best efforts. The music drowned the sound of coming footsteps. The bouquet Daisy had been twirling in his hands had slipped to the ground, and as he stooped to pick it up a terrible whack descended upon his back, making him shriek out in astonishment and pain. Simultaneously the song ended; Pete, hearing Daisy's cry, rushed to his aid, and Geff, forgetting the self-effacing rôle

assigned to him, moved forward into the gleam of the lamp. The girl at the window, beholding the figure of her serenader, guitar in hand, threw a large red rose to him, and Geff, bowing with his hand on his heart, stooped and picked it up. Unluckily, midshipmen's blouses are not designed for the reception of ladies' favors, and he found it difficult to fasten it in.

In the mean time the sounds from the corner were growing louder and more insistent. Daisy was yelling; a man's gruff voice was making what were evidently highly derogatory remarks in Portuguese, punctuated with blows. Pete was screaming, "Get him off! Take him off!" Windows down the street were opening, and the maiden, who had recognized her father's tone, was imploring Geff, with clasped hands and a torrent of language, to do something or other, he could not make out just what. He rushed to the affray, but Daisy had already got hold of the irate father's stick and thrown it clattering down the cobblestones of the hill.



THE GIRL AT THE WINDOW THREW A LARGE RED ROSE

"Run for it," he cried, "before we have all the town here!"

Pete was still shrieking as if he were the beaten one, but neither Geoffrey nor Daisy paid any attention to him until, falling and running and rolling over the hard stones of the descent, they reached a bench in a little park near the water.

"Take him off," screamed Pete piteously; "oh, do take him off, won't you?"

"What's the matter with you?" asked Daisy; but turning to see for himself, he was astonished to behold a little black monkey crouching on his friend's shoulder, his tiny fingers tightly entwined in Pete's hair, where he had inserted them when reaching out from his mistress's window.

"And I thought they were Dolores's fingers," sighed Pete, trying to disentangle the clinging creature from his neck.

"What a sell!" ejaculated Daisy, rubbing his own back vigorously; "you got a monk; I a beating, and, plebe—what did you get, plebe?"

"I got the lady's rose," said Geff boastingly, waving the flower in evidence and laughing loudly.

Daisy grabbed it and threw it away.

"Pete," he said, "this adventure of ours has got to be kept secret as the grave, or we shall never hear the end of it. If you dare mention one word about it, Mr. Summers, you may as well leave the Academy without stopping to pack up, for we'd make it too hot for you to live in. Gee! but my back does ache. Papa certainly had a heavy hand. I don't believe I think much of the custom of serenading."

Pete with his aid had at last succeeded in dislodging the monkey.

"What am I going to do with this creature?" he questioned woefully.

"Put him down and let him go home," suggested his chum.

Pete threw the little animal to a neighboring bush; but the monkey had taken a fancy to the broad shoulders of the midshipman and sprang quickly back to his perch there.

Several times the creature was started on his homeward path, but each time he insisted upon returning.

"Seems to have grown fond of you," said Geff, smiling.

"You take him back where he belongs, Mr. Summers," commanded Pete; "and hurry up about it because the boat will be leaving in half an hour."

There was no use to protest, so Geff started off with the monkey under one arm and under the other his guitar in its case, which he had prudently picked up before their flight. He had not the slightest intention of going back to the house and bringing down upon himself a repetition of Pete's fate. He meant to put the animal down as soon as he got well out of sight and to speed his going with stones. As he turned the corner, however, he ran into Blake and Harry Ledyard.

"What have you got there, Geff?" asked the former in amazement. "Is that the reward given you for your singing?"

Swearing them to secrecy, Geff told them all that had happened, and the boys laughed until they were sore at the thought of the first-classmen's predicament and disappointment.

Geff put the monkey on the ground, but it sprang quickly back into his arms.

"What am I going to do with it?" he asked; "we've got to run for the boat now."

"Take it on board with you," said Blake.

"You know it would n't be allowed," objected Geff in disgust.

"I tell you what," suggested Harry; "give me your guitar, put him into its case and carry him that way and the officer of the deck will think we have two instruments, and to-morrow nobody need know where the little darling came from."

The idea was pronounced good and immediately put into execution. The green baize cover was taken off, and after much pushing and scratching the little creature was inserted into it. It wriggled so that Geff could hardly carry it and every now and then it emitted a

cry. There was too much talking in the boat for it to be heard, but the boys were afraid that it might betray them as they went over the side of the ship. However, it was luckily quiet for the moment, and once on deck they hurried with it to the cook, bribing him to take care of it that night and to let it loose the next morning as soon as they set sail and not to breathe of their part in the transaction.

The following day, when the mountains of Madeira were growing fainter and fainter behind them, a little black creature made its appearance on deck. "Where did it come from?" asked every one.

"Whose monkey is that?" called out the officer of the deck sternly.

No one claimed it, but Harry Ledyard answered: —

"I think, sir, it belongs to Mr. Hathaway."

Mr. Hathaway, alias Pete, disclaimed any ownership in the strange stowaway; but his face grew curiously red, and officer and midshipmen were aware that there was some story

yet to be related to account for the friendliness with which the monkey immediately greeted him, springing to his shoulder and chattering as if to a long-lost brother.

"Well, since he is here, don't let the creature starve," ordered the officer to everybody in general and nobody in particular, and thought it wiser not to press further the matter of his coming.

So Funchal, as the monkey was named, became the ship's pet on the homeward cruise, making friends with every one, but still showing a decided preference for Pete. On their arrival at Annapolis he was presented by general consent, since there was no one owner to dispose of him, to the boatswain, who took him home as a pet for his children. Pete and Daisy seemed to breathe more freely after his departure, as if they had feared that some day he might have found human speech and told the tale of their last evening at Madeira.

CHAPTER IV

DISCIPLINE ON SHORE

On their return the three upper classes went off on their month's leave, and the "May plebes" looked down in disdain upon the newly entered "September plebes" who had not shared with them the initiation of the cruise. They were delighted to have ready victims on whom to vent their ill-humor, real or assumed, which they loudly expressed at having to abide in the house of bondage while the upper-classmen were playing peacock at home, dazzling the girls with their brass buttons.

But their day was a short one, and by the first of October all plebes, May and September, were treated alike and were hazed and "run" for the good of their souls and to teach them the proper respect for discipline and "rate." They were made to stand upon their heads numerous times in succession; and anxious

mothers failed to discover the reason of the frequent headaches of "my boy." Chambermaid duties were forced upon them and they had to keep not only their own room in order, but that of an upper-classman as well, with the result that they were sometimes late to formation. Those of musical abilities and those conspicuously lacking in voice or ear were "invited" to give a concert for the entertainment of a critical audience, and the former star pupil of his native high school was made perforce to learn by heart the flattering notices which had appeared in the local newspaper upon his appointment, and to recite them in a loud voice to the same audience, which vociferated enthusiastically: "Hear! Hear!"

At this time hazing still flourished as an institution at the Naval Academy, but its nature was rather more humorous than cruel. It were impossible to describe the numerous and varied forms in which the imaginations of the hazers expressed themselves.

During the cruise Blake and Geoffrey had decided to be roommates on their return, each attracted by his opposite and by the confidences which they had shared. Blake, though naturally high-spirited, had made up his mind to endure hazing gracefully as a part of his life; and though he had not the success of Harry Ledyard, who insisted upon taking all the proceedings incident to it in a spirit of fun and who disarmed his tormentors by his smile and laughter during whatever "stunts" he was called upon to perform, Blake, who was not "ranky," was little disturbed, and he endeavored to persuade Geoffrey to accept the inevitable with the same resignation.

The latter, however, refused to do so, and was in constant rebellion against all authority, that of the officers and of the midshipmen above him. Not of sufficient physical force to awe those who sought to work their will on him, as others had done, he was made to suffer for his insubordination; and had it not been for the protection of Daisy and Pete, who considered

it wise to assure his silence, he would not have known a moment's peace during his plebe year. He often threatened to report an upperclassman to those in authority; but it did not need Blake's remonstrance to convince him that such unprecedented conduct would put him beyond the pale of forgiveness.

"I hate this hole," he exclaimed to Blake one day in December when they had suffered a domiciliary visit from a cadet officer, and had been reported for certain minor infractions of the regulations. "Why under the sun was I such a blooming — blankety — blankety idiot as to take such a dare?"

"Well, there's one thing certain," answered Blake, as he lit the gaslight over the long study-table and put back a bottle of jam and some crackers into the laundry-bag, the only spot not likely to be inspected, "you won't have to stand it much longer, for you'll find yourself pretty high up on 'the Christmas tree' [the bulletin board of unsatisfactory students] with all the demerits you've been get-

ting, and when the 'semi-ans' come, you can walk out a free cit."

"And happy enough I'd be," answered his roommate, who was sitting on the edge of his cot resting his head in his hands, "if it were n't for my cussed pride and that chit of a girl cousin with her sneer."

"If you want to escape that you'd better walk a different line, then," suggested Blake, glancing up from the book of French verbs before him. "It all rests with you whether you stay in or 'bilge.' It is different with me. I can't always be sure of a 2.5, no matter how I try — drills, seamanship, conduct, all that I can manage to get good enough marks in — but math and spelling and French, my brain was n't made big or quick enough for them. You don't have to 'bone,' you lucky dog, and all the matter with you is you 've got to learn that you are not a gentleman on your own estate. You would like your breakfast in bed and a maid to do your room; you will smoke, and consequently get reported for it; you forget to say

'sir' to an upper-classman; you don't brace up when you see an officer coming, but walk along as nonchalantly as if you were strolling on Fifth Avenue. Have you the faintest idea how many demerits you have received this last month?"

"No, I've lost count. I only know that I'm always on the third-conduct grade, and that I have n't been out in the busy metropolis of Annapolis for six weeks."

"Is it worth while?" questioned Blake, closing his book with a snap and facing squarely round in his chair — "just ask yourself that?"

And Geoffrey did ask himself the question seriously then and for several days after, and came to the decision that it really was not, since his pride forced him to carry out the dare. He ceased smoking, that is, except at rare intervals; ceased to provoke actively the ire of those above him, and tried to assume a modest air of subordination which, however, he was far from feeling.

One of the steady complaints of the midship-

men was with the commissariat. No matter how bountiful or varied the food, this fault-finding is a part of every schoolboy's existence. Mrs. Ledyard, and the mothers of some other plebes, who were spending a couple of months in Annapolis, gave the matter far more importance than it deserved, and on Saturdays and Sundays, when their boys were out on liberty, they taxed the resources of their respective boarding-houses and of Wiegard, the confectioner, to fill up the supposed empty spaces. But when the boys, as frequently happened, by reason of a surplus of demerits, were prevented from leaving the Academy grounds, Mrs. Ledyard formed a "roast-chicken brigade" as Harry dubbed it, and at dusk she and the other mothers would come down to walk in the grounds with their sons, bearing beneath their capes or coats large parcels containing chickens which they had had roasted especially. Not that lighter delicacies were lacking, but Harry himself had set the fashion by stipulating for this *pièce de résistance* of a peri-

patetic feast. Mrs. Ledyard, discovering that Geoffrey was the son of an old schoolmate whom she had not seen since her girlhood, insisted that he should be included in this select assembly of guests.

One evening when Harry and Blake were hurrying to Geff's room with a plump, beautifully roasted pullet under Harry's overcoat, a second-classman, catching sight of the suspicious bulge, stopped them.

"What have you there, Mister?"

And Harry, knowing that there was no chance for escape, said with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, "A bouquet from the 'Sup' to me."

Alas! that pullet was too fat for any plebe to enjoy. A small but select party of second-classmen was soon picking its bones, leaving Geoffrey to rail at "thieves and tyrants"; but Harry and Blake took good care that these choice epithets should not go beyond their own walls.

Blake's troubles were of a different nature,

and, apart from his studies, chiefly a matter of hair and buttons. His crop of light brown hair was enormously thick, and grew, as it seemed to him, with a diabolical swiftness. As there was a regulation length beyond which its growth was an offense to discipline, he was constantly visiting the barber; but the days in their monotony merged imperceptibly into one another, and his realization of the time which had elapsed since his last visit was frequently blurred, so "Mr. McIntosh" was often reported for "hair not properly cut." And buttons! They were always flying off, perhaps on account of the vigorous brushing given by him to blouse and overcoat. He meant to sew them on, of course, but there was always some problem in geometry or a French phrase to disentangle or something amusing to be done, which seemed of so much more importance, and it took so long to pass the yard-long thread through the ridiculously minute eye of the needle.

"There's one consolation to be found in

life," suggested Geff as he watched Blake struggle in this way one day; "that is that we are n't 'femmes.' I'd rather go through a setting-up drill than sew."

So Blake, forgetting that one button was missing on his blouse or trusting hopefully that its inconspicuous position would save him from discovery, would enter the English section-room, where the instructor, after he had requested him to explain the different uses of "shall" and "will," would drawl out, "Mr. McIntosh, there's a button off your blouse." And then there was one more demerit for Blake to reckon with.

The working suits of coarse white duck had always been an abomination to Geff's æsthetic taste and sensitive skin. They were so stiff and harsh that he protested loudly against them. He discovered, however, that, like much else, they improved with age, growing softer with every washing. That accounted for what had puzzled him on his entrance — the sight of a midshipman wearing a jumper with three or

four names stenciled in black, one under the other, across the front, — those of the successive owners who had passed it down. When it became time for them to add to their supply, he and Blake endeavored in vain to secure some of the pass-me-downs, and Geff looked in dismay at the stiff white heap to be put away in the wardrobes.

"Let's send them to the laundry," he suggested; "they don't keep an account of how many we wear a week."

"No, that won't do," replied Blake; "they'd see that they are clean and there's a regulation against sending clean clothes."

"Then, let's make them dirty," cried Geff, with a sudden inspiration.

"Here, Clown," he called out as Harry Ledyard, who now answered to the above name among others, entered the room, "help us sweep, will you?" And taking up a pair of trousers, Geff began using it as a broom or dry mop along the floor. Harry joined in at once, and seizing a jumper sought as eagerly for

dust as any Dutch housewife. Blake, at first protesting, could not resist, so opening their door and making sure that there were no spectators, they swept the garments along the halls back and forth, so clean that morning, but now stained with muddy boots. A cadet officer, whose tread had not been audible on account of the swish of the novel brooms, was upon them before they knew what had happened; but though there were few tricks in the repertoire of a midshipman with which he was not familiar, he did not understand just what was going on. He would naturally report them for being out of their rooms during study period, but he knew of no regulation which forbade waving clothes up and down, which seemed to be what they were doing. But when the clothes went to the laundry some one must have comprehended the unusual treatment to which they had been subjected, and Midshipmen McIntosh, Ledyard, and Summers were ordered to the Santee for "sending new garments to the laundry."

Geff remarked: "It's impossible for me to get the hang of the crimes which fit the punishments here. Now we are on the prison ship for a mere nothing, and lots of fellows do a great deal worse and get only five demerits. However, I don't mind much. At least, we get a rest from hazing."

But to Blake it was more of a punishment, and he felt ashamed to be seen as their little squad was marched back and forth between the ship and recitations. He was obliged also to write a note of explanation to his aunt, who came down from Washington to see him, confessing that he could not go out to dine with her in town on account, as Geff dictated, "of too great a love for cleanliness."

CHAPTER V

THE SEMI-ANS

THE dreaded "semi-ans" had come, the half-yearly examinations.

"When I think now," remarked Blake disconsolately, as they strolled one dismal afternoon through "Oklahoma" to the Government Farm, "of my stupidity in imagining that I had only to pass the entrance exams to be safe, I laugh to remember what a fool I was. What do you think my chances are, Geff?" he asked for the fiftieth time in the past week. "I've been on the tree every Saturday now for a month."

"Go pray Tecumseh," suggested Geoffrey, alluding to the custom of a pretended prayer to Tecumseh, a finely carved figurehead, from one of the old wooden frigates, now marooned in the Academy grounds. This new deity among marine gods was besought by the storms he had braved to help the future sailors

achieve a 2.5 (the lowest possible pass-mark in the examinations).

"I've boned and boned and boned," continued Blake, "until my eyes are aching so I can't keep them open."

"Oh, don't bother so," exclaimed Geff, himself decidedly worried at the recollection of the long list of demerits against his record. "I'd be happy to leave this hole next week if I had n't mortgaged my next four years. Oh, I wish I were traveling now with mother. What good times I could have."

They had arrived at the golf links where a number of officers and red-coated ladies were playing. Blake looked on enviously.

"Imagine having the time and chance for a game," he said.

"I think," suggested Geff, "that to judge by our present mood, the cemetery is the proper place for us." So they strolled over to the little promontory where the naval graveyard is situated. The beauty of the spot, with the river on both sides, and its wide view of the

bay and the Academy grounds below, and its well-cared-for graves, had little that was depressing about it, however, and many of the names upon the headstones were familiar to Blake, as those of friends or shipmates of his father. They recalled his father to him.

"Dear old dad," he said mournfully, "won't he be frightfully disappointed if I bilge!"

"Then you must n't," exclaimed Geff emphatically. "It's a different matter with me; I have to avoid collecting any more demerits between now and next week, and heaven knows what about my personal appearance, manners, or behavior may displease those in authority. I simply can't help it if the lightning strikes me; but it's an easy enough matter for you in an exam — when you care so much" — he added, hesitating a little.

"What do you mean?" asked Blake, his brows knitting in an effort to understand the other's thought. "You can't be advising me to 'gouge,' Geff! But I won't have that even in jest."

"Oh, come along, you little prig, you, or we shall be late again," said Geff, turning, partly to escape Blake's indignant eyes.

"Look here, Geff," said Blake, taking him by the arm, "understand one thing, I am not a prig, but I'd bilge to-morrow before I'd cheat to stay in. I know that there is a certain amount of gouging going on, more's the pity; but I tell you I'll never have anything to do with any one who is guilty of it. You have n't any need to do it yourself and would n't in any case, I know; but don't you suggest my dreaming of such a thing or there'll be trouble between us."

Geoffrey, who had grown fonder of his companion than of any one he had ever known, felt thankful that certain little surreptitious peeps at notes written on his cuffs, when he had been too lazy to look over a day's lesson, had not been observed by Blake, and he determined that in future he would run no risks of falling in his chum's estimation.

The days passed in feverish excitement, and

even Blake's healthy body showed the effects of extra study and anxiety.

"Why," he asked, after he emerged from a struggle over a paper, "does an officer need to know so much? If it were only seamanship and drill and navigation, I should n't mind, but all the rest seems so useless."

The boys looked eagerly at the bulletin board, and Blake found that the fairly good marks of his monthly recitations brought up his average to a percentage which just allowed him to remain. Luckily even Geoffrey's demerits fell a few short of the fatal number. Harry Ledyard came through with flying colors, but he almost regretted them when his mother waved them continuously before everybody.

"Can you tell me anything about young Burton's marks?" she asked her son as they were walking out to a triumphal feast she had prepared for him at the boarding-house. "His father was down last month, you know, to see him and I have never looked into a sterner

face. You could see that the boy is thoroughly in awe of him. He's an Army officer with a lot of children, and he told his son — so Miss Lancy says, who declares she could n't help overhearing him talking in the next room — that if Burton failed, he would not do anything to get him another appointment nor send him to college, so he would just have to go to work. I suppose, to do him justice, that he is poor and must look out for the other children."

"Poor Burton!" exclaimed Harry, pulling down his blouse with a touch that was almost caressing, "he bilged!"

"And where is he?" asked Mrs. Ledyard, whose kind heart went out to the unhappy boy. "How will he face his father? Was it his fault? Did n't he study?"

"Oh, yes, hard enough," answered her son, "but he was slow and could n't even read through all his lessons sometimes. You know what a lot they give us, and how lucky it is that my eyes travel over pages quickly. He would have learned to do it soon, too, but

now he won't get the chance, poor Burton. Sh! there he is."

A boyish figure, holding itself very erect, trying to appear at ease in the civilian's clothes, walked past them out of the gate, not once looking back, though it was another Adam exiled from Paradise.

"Oh, Harry!" exclaimed Mrs. Ledyard, "how sorry I am for him, and all he has to give up," she added, unconscious of the change in her sentiments since the day of the beginning of the cruise, when she had tried to alter her son's decision.

"It is rough," he assented; "I wonder where he's going now. The Short Line train does n't start for three hours and he has no friends in town."

Just then some acquaintances greeted them and asked them in to tea, and Harry found a girl home from school, the youngest of the family, who was delighted to amuse and tease as insignificant a creature as a plebe, who did not exist for her older sisters, one of

whom was a "second class girl," and the other engaged to an august first-classman. It was very cozy, with tea and cakes galore, and Harry was certainly in the way to spoil his appetite, if the appetite of a boy of sixteen can be spoiled, for the dinner which was to come. He had forgotten about all the unhappy "bilgers" by the time he went back to quarters.

He found great excitement reigning there: little knots of midshipmen were scattered about talking eagerly.

"What is it, Geff?" he asked, grabbing him; "what is the matter?"

Geoffrey was trembling like a girl.

"Oh! have n't you heard?" he cried, and his lip quivered; "Burton has shot himself!"

"While I was being stuffed with cakes and flattery," said Harry. "Why did n't I go out with him when I saw him leaving? Perhaps I might have prevented it," he added sadly, looking very grave.

Perhaps some tender gardeners feel a pity

for the fresh young plants which they are forced to uproot and throw away in order to make room for the remaining ones to grow and spread themselves. Certain it is that many of the instructors at the Academy asked themselves whether they might have been a little more lenient with Burton. But there was the high intellectual standard which must be maintained, and, after all, if it must come in the end, it was kinder to cut off hopes before the roots had twined themselves too deeply into the earth. There was a shadow over the entire town for the next few days, for Annapolis, though she is justly proud of her ancient history, cannot shut herself off in dignified isolation and forget the life of the federal institution over which she has no state or civic control. The other midshipmen who had failed took their departure less tragically; to some it was an actual release from a discipline which had proved too stringent.

Spring was at hand, and Blake rejoiced in all the outdoor drills as much as Geff disliked

them. The latter complained that his shoulders ached from carrying a gun, and that the bend of his knees was painful after fencing, and that he had small desire to emulate monkeys in the gymnasium. While Blake spent some of his spare hours in the shooting-gallery, practicing with a pistol, Geff would occupy his, which, thanks to his quickness at study, were more numerous, in the library, reading. He was still in constant opposition to every form of discipline, resented every regulation, and though he had made many friends in his own class by reason of his likeable nature and the amusing way in which he expressed his grumblings, he was by no means a favorite with his superiors. Some of the officers frankly expressed the opinion that his insubordination was likely to be dangerously infectious, and hoped that he might be among those who failed in June. He gave them no such satisfaction, however, for his marks in the final exams put him in the first quarter of his class.

June Week, though its festivities were en-

joyed principally from the outside, was a very different one from its predecessor. Already the order was changing with the graduation of the first class and the entry of the new plebes.

The cruise was again to be gone through — a happy experience for a webfoot, as Geff privately dubbed Blake, and even Geff found that habit made much bearable. He counted the days until leave in September, which he was to pass with his mother near New York, where he would be able to go often to the metropolis and live once again the life of a "gentleman and a scholar." Blake was to spend his time with some relatives, and promised Geff to visit him the last week. The "cits'" clothes were brought out of their hiding, dusty and often moth-eaten after long neglect, and a happy crowd of youths set forth from the little Annapolis station for freedom and spoiling at home.

CHAPTER VI

THIRD-CLASSMEN

BLAKE, who had been brought up in a well-bred Spartan simplicity, was astonished at the luxury and ease which surrounded Geoffrey in the apparently modest cottage Mrs. Summers had rented for the season. It was not at all difficult for him to accommodate himself to breakfasting in bed, trips to New York, and suppers after the theatre, as this was simply a "spree" for him during which ordinary habits were temporarily abandoned. But to Geff it was the normal existence, ennobled by music, art, and literature, for all of which he had real talent. There was, however, no striving, no endeavor in this life, no hardships to overcome, no discipline from without or within. Geff's nature was naturally a sweet one, clouded often by melancholy; but the good in him was the result of no conscious

training. Blake could now better comprehend how difficult it had been for Geff to adapt himself to such radically different surroundings as those of the Academy, and his fondness for his friend and his admiration increased when he realized how much will it took for him to remain true to his determination. His mother, who could not understand that a decision made in a moment of pique could have become such a directing force in her son's existence, offered him his choice of any university in America or Europe, or study in the atelier of a famous artist in Paris, or a stay in Germany to complete his musical education, which, of course, need be only an excuse for a delightful career of idleness.

"No," answered Geff, with a curt decision such as his mother had rarely heard in his voice. "Don't tempt me, mother. Back I go to that hole. I have n't many virtues, but I have pride. If it were n't for Blake here, I don't think I could stand it; but he'll begin to blush if I talk sentiment and tell you how fond

I am of him. He's the true Anglo-Saxon, and the heritage of the old Latins, that somehow or other fell to me, has no attraction for him. The same old life which charmed his forebears in England before the Norman Conquest is what he cares for — fighting, the call of the sea, honor, and clean living."

He tapped Blake on the shoulder affectionately, who blushed, as predicted, since Mrs. Summers's presence prevented his punching Geff as he would have liked to do.

September was over all too soon, and the two friends journeyed back together to Annapolis, meeting many of their class at the old junction at Odenton which has seen the coming and going of countless midshipmen. There were cheerful greetings of "Hello, Monk!" — "Where did you get that hat, Beaut?" — "Have you brought any new songs, Siren?" — "How many hearts did you crack, Apollo?" — "Plum's grown thinner; look, fellows, he only weighs about two hundred pounds now; let's put him on the scales in the waiting-room."

And some Annapolis matrons, on their way back from a shopping-trip in Baltimore, smiled at the sight of the plump, red-cheeked youth borne, protesting, to the rusty scales where his avoirdupois was declared to be distressingly small — "only half a ton, Plum, it's pitiful. How did you lose it all? Never mind, we'll fatten you up now you've come back to our tender care."

Geff, in spite of his distaste for the life to which he was returning, experienced a genuine pleasure in this noisy companionship, and he was flattered to find how popular he was with his class. Nor could he help exclaiming, "By Jove, that's beautiful!" as he entered the Academy grounds and looked down the vista of Lovers' Lane across the parade ground to the wide blue bay, and walked beneath the ancient trees just beginning to exchange their green for gold.

"If it only were n't for recitations I should be perfectly happy here," sighed Blake, and the others laughed.

It was hard to get back into the old ways again, but there were also new ones to be learned. No longer plebes, there were many privileges which they now "rated," and there was a new class of unfortunate youths who must be made to suffer as they had suffered. Harry Ledyard was full of ingenious devices to make them serve as actors in a show which amused audience and players as well, for there was nothing approaching brutality in his hazing. He disdained time-honored forms, since his imagination supplied him with superior substitutes. Geff confined his hazing to teaching table manners. Disgusted at a lack of knowledge of table etiquette shown by some of the newcomers appointed from small, out-of-the-way places, where the meat is more than the way it is served, he saw to it that an improper use of the knife meant the forfeit of a piece of pie, and that drinking soup audibly was followed by swift penalties. "You are being trained to be officers and gentlemen," he would say, "and just remember this, you

can't be the former unless you're the latter." Blake's hazing was limited to a strict enforcement of all disciplinary regulations; and provided a plebe held himself erect, dressed neatly, spoke deferentially, he was safe from any molestation from him, though he formed part of the audience at the variety performances presided over by "Graveyard," as Harry Ledyard was called because of a certain similarity of sound to the syllables of his name and dissimilarity of association.

Then came an event by no means to be underrated—their first hop—since a threatened attack of tonsillitis had kept both away from the June ball. Blake at first refused to go.

"I don't like dancing," he had declared, "and can't do it well in spite of our lessons last winter. I don't know what to say to a girl; they're either gushing or shy, and both kinds make me shyer still. And why should we want to go hopping round a warm room when we might sit here and swap yarns?"

"Don't be a baby, Blake," protested Geff,

"and get into that dress-jacket in a jiffy. Don't you know that one of an officer's duties is making himself agreeable in society, and that perhaps some time he may secure valuable information from the prattle of a 'femme' at a ball in a foreign country?"

"Oh, what dime novel have you been reading?" called out his companion as he struggled into a clean collar. "I suppose I'll have to go and look on unless I want to stay behind with the plebes; but thank the Lord! we have n't any partners waiting for us. I suppose it's the last time it'll be so for you," he added, a little sadly; "for what was it that old Cæsar said, *veni* — something or other? Are n't you glad we don't have to study Latin here? Well, at all events, that's what you'll do once you meet the girls to-night. You'll get interested in them, your head'll be full of them, and you'll —"

"Forget all about a certain Mr. McIntosh," interrupted Geff, who did indeed look bent upon a campaign of success. "Yes, when I

have ceased to be seasick, to hate drill, and to love old Gumshoes" — a nickname of one of the disciplinary officers disliked for what were considered his sneaking methods of spying. "Oh, of course I'll have a good time with the 'femmes.' I'm used to their ways, so my head isn't likely to be turned; but I predict yours will some day, youngster, and I suggest that we exchange confidences about the charming sex, at least until I see that they don't ill-treat you and until you can hold your own. Come on," he continued; "there's not a speck more dust on those trousers. And put a couple of clean collars in your cap; you'll want them dancing this muggy night."

"But I'm not going to dance," Blake protested.

By the time they arrived at the Armory, the entrance was crowded by light cloaks, gauzy headgear, dress-jackets, and a few plain black coats of civilians. There were one or two hacks, but as the night was almost as warm as a spring evening, and as most of the girls lived

near and were aware of the pecuniary standing of their partners, they were content to walk in their satin slippers over the old streets which had been pressed by so many generations of merrymakers.

The receiving party — the wife of the Superintendent and the Four-Striper — were standing in the middle of the long hall, and Geff and Blake, after paying their respects to them, joined the crowd of their classmates who were without partners. But the red-uniformed band had begun to play under Zimmerman's waving baton, and as the hop lasted until ten-thirty only, there was no fashionable coming in late. Those midshipmen whose partners' cards were yet unfilled were rushing about to get dancers inscribed on them.

"Here, Summers," cried a first-classman, "come and be introduced to Miss Tracy and ask for a dance. She's a stranger or I should n't be waiting to fill her card at this late hour."

And Geff, nothing loath, was introduced and put his name down for a couple of dances.

Then he was called off and taken up to a local belle who had announced her desire to begin with the third class or "she would get left when the others graduated." She passed him on with a whispered recommendation to friends, and Geff, who had neglected to provide himself with a card, soon had his cuffs scribbled over.

Blake stood looking on, almost bewildered at the brightness of the room hung with flags, the passing of the light-colored gowns, and the rhythm of the music which had something compelling in its insistence; and for the first time he wished that he cared more for such things.

"Mr. McIntosh," said one of the officers, coming up to him, "my wife wants to meet you, as she used to know your father."

So Blake had a very pleasant little talk with Mrs. Sidney, who made him promise to dine with her on Sunday. Then she introduced him to an exceedingly young lady, her daughter Lindsay.

"Are n't you going to ask me to dance, Mr. McIntosh?" inquired the girl, after a slight pause, when the expected invitation failed to be voiced.

"I 'm afraid to," he confessed; "I have never danced with a girl in my life. I should be sure to step on her gown."

"You could n't on mine," she laughingly objected, looking down at her girlishly short skirts. "Come try; you 've got to begin sometime. We 'll go down by the door where the floor is pretty free."

And Blake, blushing and timorous, made his initial essay, which was not so bad, and his partner gave him frank hints as to the proper manner of holding her and of reversing; and then, when the dance was over and Blake was half dreading the *tête-à-tête* he thought must ensue, she was claimed by a young St. John's College student, leaving Blake relieved yet grateful for her interest.

"Where did you hide yourself?" asked Geff, as they went back to their quarters when the

music was over and the dancers scattered through the grounds. "I tried to get hold of you to introduce you to some of the 'femmes.' Did n't you dance at all? I danced every number, and I have enjoyed it."

"I danced once," said Blake, "with Sidney's daughter. I could n't help it," he added, already fearing that Geff would tease him; "she asked me."

"She's a pretty little child," commented Geff condescendingly, "and will do very well to take you out of the nursery. When are you going to see her?"

"I am going to dine with *her mother* on Sunday," corrected Blake.

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL LIFE

For the first time in many months Blake McIntosh experienced a feeling of homesickness. The Sidneys' house in Blake Row, filled with so many objects which recalled those his own father had brought home from foreign countries, — embroideries from Japan, an ostrich egg from South Africa, like the one which had puzzled him as a child when he tried to reconstruct in proportion the hen which could have laid it, — all brought back to him memories of his early boyhood and of his parents.

Geff's teasing had made him self-conscious in regard to meeting Lindsay. If it had not been for this joking on the subject, Blake would scarcely have considered her as belonging yet in the category of young ladies old enough to receive visitors. The stiff manner in

which he greeted her as she came running downstairs, to say that her mother was resting a little after church, but would soon be down, vanished, however, when the gray African parrot with a red tail started the conversation with a loud "Hurrah for the Red, White and Blue!" and finding that his audience did not seem to applaud sufficiently this patriotic sentiment, continued in the same strain, "Three cheers for the Stars and the Stripes!"

"I did n't see you at chapel this morning," remarked Lindsay when the bird had quieted down and sat watching them with his head cocked on one side, as if storing up phrases for future occasions. "You are n't in the choir, are you?"

"No, but my roommate, Mr. Summers, is. You should hear him sing. He's a regular genius in music, and he paints, too. You must let me bring him to see you some day."

"Oh, yes, I know him well by sight; he's good-looking, and I think maybe he's stuck on himself and perhaps needs a little taking

down. I heard of him last year when he was a plebe, and all the trouble he got into on account of his resisting hazing. Bring him along and I'll haze him now a little for his good."

Blake glanced up in astonishment at the child, — for in years she was nothing more, — amazed that she should venture to patronize one who had seen so much of the world as Geff.

"I usually find," she continued, with the air of one who had made an exhaustive study of humanity, "that men who have so many talents are not the ones you would care to risk your life with in time of danger. I don't want to cast any reflections on your friend, but of the two I'd surely choose you, Mr. McIntosh, if it came to an emergency."

Blake was too young not to be pleased at this flattery, in spite of the feeling that he received it at Geff's expense. They talked on a number of subjects, and Blake found Lindsay very interested in his present life and almost as well acquainted with its details as he himself. When

he expressed his astonishment at her knowledge, she said: —

"Of course, I know about it. Have n't I spent most of my life here! Father gets stationed here whenever he comes back from sea. I can't imagine any life outside of the Service, can you? I have one big grudge against Fate, — two, in fact, — the first that I 'm not a boy, to be a naval officer, and the second, that I have n't even a brother whose career I could follow. The only thing I can do is to have a number of brothers, and you, I think, are going to be one of them, won't you, Mr. McIntosh?"

Naturally Blake, without understanding exactly the responsibilities of this adopted relationship, promised, and then Mr. and Mrs. Sidney came down and dinner was served.

Blake soon discovered that, though Lindsay had too many "brothers" to be dependent upon him, it was very agreeable to slip into the house on Blake Row during a free hour Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. He and Lindsay had long since discarded the "Mr."

and "Miss," and Geff, too, was on a friendly footing there, though he and Lindsay quarreled continually whenever he made any statement derogatory to either the Academy or the Navy.

"He's too much of a yacht build," she remarked to Blake once, "and he needs a good deal of overhauling and changing before he'll be really seaworthy."

Still, the quarrels, though animated, left no sting, and the three were excellent friends. Her attitude of patronage towards him amused Geff, since he was much sought after by other girls, and there were no houses in the Academy or the town of Annapolis where there were young people where he was not made welcome and flattered. Blake, though he deplored this excess of social activity on his friend's part, occasionally compromised by accompanying him and dancing at the hops with those girls whom Geff and Lindsay insisted upon his knowing.

It was to one of these, whose name he had scarcely heard, that Blake was indebted for a

number of demerits and a relegation to the third-conduct grade. Lindsay had told him that she was in a fix from which she looked to him to help her out. A girl she knew in Washington was coming down to the Easter hop, but as the Sidney house was to be full of other guests, she was not to visit them, but to stay at a boarding-house in the town. Her escort to the hop, a first-classman, had been taken suddenly ill and had had to go to the hospital.

"So you'll have to take her, Blake," she commanded, "and it's lucky you have n't any other partner."

"But I can't," protested Blake; "I'm on the second-conduct grade. I can't go out into town."

"All right! She'll come down to the Armory and go back with some other people from the house; but you'll dance with her and make up her card. And I think you'd better send her some flowers; they won't be expensive at this season."

So Blake sent as large a bunch of roses as his

small allowance would permit, with a polite note, written by Geff and copied by himself, saying that he regretted he should be unable to call upon Miss Parsons beforehand, but that he looked forward to the pleasure of being her partner at the hop and would, of course, see to her card.

"You'll have to help me fill it, Geff."

"Have n't but one dance left and that I was reserving for some chance beauty; but you can have that, I suppose, seeing it's you."

"What's she like?" asked Harry Ledyard, upon being appealed to to do likewise; "kittenish, dignified, or natural? Is her name on our list?"

"No, she's never been here before; how could it be?"

The list referred to was well known by hearsay to Annapolis girls, who would have given everything they owned for a glimpse of it; but its mischievous framers wisely refrained from letting it out of their possession. On it the different girls who came regularly to the hops

were scheduled according to the figures used in the Academy for marking studies and discipline.

"Josie Smith — dancing, 2.5 [just passable]; conversation, 4" [perfect].

"Ethel Hill — looks, 3" [on the whole, rather pretty].

"Constance Simons — dress 4; age, 2.5" [meaning that Miss S. had seen many a June Ball].

It was very convenient for those boys who had no intention of wasting any of their time or fascinations, though there was a system of exchange in vogue whereby Dick, who cared more for youth badly dressed, would agree to take a dance with Miss Simons, for instance, to whom Rob was under obligations to be polite, if Rob, on the other hand, would promise to dance several times with Dick's cousin next June Week, accepting her — to speak in a most discourteous manner of a lady — as a pig in a poke.

So by dint of mortgaging many free dances

for the next hop, Blake filled Miss Parsons's card; but it was at the ratio of two for one, as he could give no information as to looks, dancing, or conversation.

She was marked the next day — for future reference — as 3 in everything, consequently there is no need to describe her. Blake enjoyed the evening fairly well; he had grown to be fond of dancing as he was of all other forms of physical motion.

The hop was nearing an end and he looked round for the people with whom Miss Parsons had come, but upon inquiry discovered that they had already left, believing, of course, that her escort was to see her home. Blake, neglecting his partner for the next waltz, rushed about for Lindsay to lay the dilemma before her, but she was strolling somewhere outside in the warm dark evening. He asked one or two of his classmates if they were free, only to learn that they all had their own partners to escort. He thought of sending for a carriage, but realized that even then he would have to

accompany her in it. There was nothing to do but to "french" it (go without leave). So when the hop was over, Miss Parsons, who as a stranger had no understanding of the facts, found Blake ready. As they went along with so many others streaming through the gate, Blake was confident that the sentry had not noticed him. The walk was a short one, but Miss Parsons had lost the key given her and it took some time for a sleepy colored maid to come down and open the door. There was no chance of returning through the gate at that hour, and Blake, whose first experience of "frenching" this was, tried to recall the spot on the wall where he had been told by others that the descent was easiest. He had scaled it often in drill, but then it was from another midshipman's back. He hunted almost the entire length, and finally discovered a foothold and succeeded in climbing to the top. The night was dark, and though he listened and looked, he could see nothing but the lights in the town behind, and in the Academy

before him. He slid down, gradually — into the arms of the waiting watchman!

Geff shouted with amusement when his crestfallen roommate made his appearance. "The Reward of Courtesy," he cried; "I'll draw a picture of it to-morrow for the Lucky Bag."

"Oh, shut up, won't you!" snapped Blake as he turned over in bed; "and it is n't even as if I had liked her enough to make it worth while."

He had an enforced interview with the Commandant the next day.

"Frenching, Mr. McIntosh; I believe you cannot deny being caught redhanded, as it were. Will you give me an explanation?"

They were two interesting human beings as they faced each other: the dapper little officer, neat as a pin, who managed those beneath him at sea and on shore with strict and impartial discipline, and the wholesome, honest boy who would perhaps grow to be something like his superior officer.

"Miss Parsons's escorts left before the hop

was over, and as there was no one else to go with her, naturally I could not allow her to go home alone."

"Naturally, Mr. McIntosh," assented the officer, nodding approval. "As a gentleman you had no other course, and I should have acted in the same manner."

Blake looked up in astonishment. Was he, then, really to escape punishment for breaking a rule?

"But," continued the Commandant, a certain dry humor betraying itself in his voice, "though you acted according to the dictates of a gentleman, you have gone counter to the regulations which govern a midshipman, and consequently I shall have to give you the requisite number of demerits and relegate you to the third-conduct grade."

Blake's face fell and his head drooped just the slightest degree. And the Commandant, noticing this, added:

"But I wish to shake hands with you, Mr. McIntosh. Good-morning."

CHAPTER VIII

THE QUARREL

THE great friendship between Blake McIntosh and Geoffrey Summers had always been incomprehensible to those who did not understand the attraction which dissimilar natures so often exert over each other. Now, though their different tastes led them frequently into opposite directions, Blake to athletics, and Geoffrey towards more sedentary pursuits, they were no less good chums. They quarreled, of course, as most friends do, but their misunderstandings did not last. Geff learned how to avoid rousing the dogged obstinacy which on rare occasions made Blake absolutely unmanageable; and Blake, pitying the lack of physical aggressiveness in Geff, respected him all the more for his efforts to overcome his weakness. Each helped the other more than he knew, for

the help was given and received unconsciously. All technical studies were easy for Blake, and in seamanship and ordnance he straightened out the rough paths for Geff, who in turn explained away difficulties in English, French, and Spanish.

Not Blake himself was now more determined to graduate from the Academy, though their motives and plans for their futures were so different. Geff's ambition was to graduate a "star," and yet with an inconsistency both boyish and human he did not do the necessary work to bring this about. He had become interested in mechanical drawing, and the delicate instruments in his box tempted him to experiment with them many an hour when he should have been studying. Neither he nor Blake liked "skinny," as physics and chemistry are termed in midshipman slang, and he had relied too often on his ability to imbibe knowledge easily instead of on the hard work this subject required. Consequently he had frequently found himself "unsat," and seemed

more anxious than Blake had ever known him as they went into the section room for the semi-annual examination.

The room was large, in the loft of the New Quarters, and the two chums sat at the back, but on opposite sides. Blake was running his hands through his thick hair, as was his habit in moments of great mental exertion. He wondered how Geff was getting on, for he knew that the former was even less well prepared than himself. He noticed that he, too, was looking unusually perplexed and that the pen of the ready writer lay idle on the desk before him. As Blake glanced over a second time half an hour later, Geff was writing rapidly, and a small black notebook, in which he was accustomed to keep all kinds of miscellaneous data, such as engagements, money owed to florists, sketches and caricatures, was peeping below his cuff.

A sudden suspicion flashed across his mind, but he shook his head emphatically. It was not possible! Geff could not be "gouging"!

Geff, his friend, could not cheat! There had been several occasions when the thought of such a possibility had come to him, at times when Geff had passed an excellent examination in a study for which he had prepared only slightly, but Blake had repulsed this suspicion indignantly and explained Geff's success to himself by the brilliancy for which he had such admiration. There were men who cheated, he knew, but he knew also that Geff was well aware what his opinion was of them. He tried to put his mind on his paper, but the questions seemed to be written in unknown characters, and he could not keep his eyes off Geff and the little book which emerged now and then below the cuff.

There could be no doubt of it any longer. Geff was "gouging"! Blake grew angrier and angrier every moment and his own nervousness at the result of the examination, his fondness for Geff and humble looking up to his superior mental abilities — all were now only fuel to feed "one of Blake's rages." He had touched

something unclean; had lived close to it all these months!

At last the time was over and the class had dwindled away one by one as each finished his paper. Blake strode up to Geff, who happened to be standing alone at the foot of the steps.

"You gouged! you gouged!" was all that he could say.

Instinctively, with the feeling that at all costs he must keep the truth from the excited Blake, Geff said, in as natural a voice as he could command: —

"Are you crazy, Blake? Of course I did n't gouge."

"Liar as well as cheat!" cried Blake, now in a perfect fury. "I saw you; I saw the little book."

As some of his classmates were still within hearing distance, Geff raised his hand quickly to put it over Blake's mouth and prevent further disclosures. But he did not take into consideration that Blake was not standing still, and the result was a slight blow, returned

immediately by one from Blake which almost staggered him.

"You know what must be done," said Blake, walking away, while his classmates who had witnessed the action, but had not overheard the words, looked after him in amazement.

Geff Summers stood still, stunned not so much by the physical blow, as by the situation in which he stood. What a retribution for having failed to keep the promises made to himself! His moral sense had been growing since he entered the Academy, and there were certain tendencies he was learning to detest in his nature, because he knew that Blake would not tolerate them, and also because they now were hideous to him as well. He had occasionally helped himself through difficult work by means which he now despised, but that had been during the first year. He had promised himself when he returned as a "youngster" that such methods were to be outgrown by the man as childish mumps or measles. Not once before that year,

"YOU GOUGED! YOU GOUGED!"

in spite of many temptations, had he failed to keep his word — not until that morning, when, realizing how little prepared he was, he had made notes in the little book, even then meaning not to use them except in case of absolute need.

And now Blake had seen him cheat and heard him lie! had struck him and believed himself struck by him! And the consequences were what — a fight! Well, at least, the latter need not take place; he could prevent that. He knew that Blake would not let wild horses drag from him the cause of their quarrel, and after he had cooled down he would go and eat humble pie and tell Blake just how he despised himself and of his resolutions for the future. He knew that most boys would feel only anger with Blake on account of the blow, but though for a moment Geff had "seen red" and had wanted to hit back, that feeling had quickly passed, and now he was conscious only of the wrong on his own side and of Blake's just resentment at his behavior.

He strolled about the grounds thinking the matter over. He was willing to give Blake any pledge he liked and would accept any conditions his chum chose to make, if he would only believe in his genuine desire to live up to new standards. He was astounded to realize how strong his affection for Blake had become; that even the thought of losing his respect and friendship affected him as nothing else in the world could do. He wondered in what state of mind he would find Blake, whether his anger, stronger than any he had ever seen in him before, would have moderated sufficiently to allow of a quiet explanation. He wanted it over, yet put it off as long as he could, until it was necessary for him to return for formation. He went up to their room immediately after supper, but Blake did not come in. Instead, Harry Ledyard appeared.

"I've come for some of Blake's things," he said; "he's staying with me until the fight is over. Putney had to go to the hospital to-day, so I've a bed for him."

"Look here, Harry," said Geff, "you stay here a minute while I go in and have a talk with Blake."

"It's no use, Summers, he won't see you until the fight. Send some one to me as soon as you like and we will arrange things."

When Harry had gone, Geff, shoving his books impatiently aside, pulled out a box of cigarettes from its hiding-place, where it had long lain undisturbed, lighted one, careless of all consequences, and faced the situation. Blake would not see him and expected him to fight! Strange as it may seem, Geff had never had a real fight in his life. Of course, he had struck and received a few quick blows, but he had never stood up in cold blood to fight in a scientific manner, with witnesses. He had a sudden mental picture of blood streaming down Blake's face and of a broken nose, his own or Blake's, he did not know which, and a feeling of nausea overcame him. He would not fight — would the wrong he had done himself and Blake be remedied by any such measures?

If he refused, Blake would be angry at first; then he would understand that fighting between them was absurd and unnecessary, and he would soon forget his injury, and, after listening quietly to apologies and promises, would understand and forgive. There would be a couple of disagreeable days ahead, but that was better at least than those preceding a fight.

The next morning he caught Harry in his bathgown on his return from his shower.

"Look here, Harry," he said, trying to speak in a light manner, "tell Blake I have not the slightest intention of fighting him, that I want a few minutes' talk if he is calm enough to listen."

"Won't fight?" cried Harry, and even in his costume with the hood over his head, he looked impressive; "won't fight, Summers, when you were seen to strike each other! Of course, you must; there's nothing else to do."

"I don't intend to," said Geff emphatically, for he too could be stubborn. "I tell you I

won't fight; tell Blake so, too, and that I'll see him as soon as he comes to himself."

"Very well," said Harry shortly, turning away.

His tone of disgust was the opening note of the orchestra which Geff was to listen to for several days. Harry Ledyard was not slow in spreading the news that Geoffrey Summers was a coward and refused to fight Blake McIntosh after they had exchanged blows before witnesses. Geff found himself sent to Coventry by every member of his class. No one spoke to him at meals; when he came up, all eyes were lowered, and when he had passed he caught whispered words which stung him. It was an experience such as he had never before undergone; his popularity had been sweeter to him than he had realized. He spent his spare time in the library, trying to distract his mind by reading.

The quarrel had taken place on Tuesday; on Saturday, according to midshipman etiquette, the fight should have come off. Geff hoped

that by Sunday Blake would have given up all thought of it and that relations between them would begin to improve, although he was now confronted with the knowledge that somehow or other he should have to win back not only his esteem, but that of the rest of his classmates. But Sunday and Monday passed without any sign from Blake, and on Wednesday Geff wrote him a long letter and sent it by post. It was returned to him the next morning with a few words in Blake's handwriting on the back of the envelope: "L. and C., will you fight?" Geff knew too well that the initials stood for "Liar" and "Cheat."

He was at last thoroughly angry. Well, he would fight if that was what the young savage wanted. He went in search of Tom Peyton, a Virginian who had the reputation of having fought more fights than any one else at the Academy. He found him at first unwilling to listen to him, but, on hearing his desire, Peyton promised to see to the arrangements.

"It's too late, though, Summers," he said,

shaking his head. "This should have been done a week ago. Every one will say that you were simply driven to fight by being kept in Coventry, and I am afraid it will not help you very much, though, of course, better late than never. Can you use your fists?"

"Now, Peyton," said Geff, "I shall be exceedingly grateful to you if you will arrange everything, only don't bother me with any details. When the moment comes, I'll stand up and hit out as best I can. I don't care whether my method is scientific nor for the results."

Peyton sighed at such unsportsmanlike opinions, but set off immediately to talk with Harry Ledyard about the Saturday meeting.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIGHT

"LET us stroll over towards the hospital," suggested a young lady to her midshipman escort one bright Saturday afternoon when such couples are to be found in all corners of the Academy grounds.

"I had thought you would prefer to stay nearer the band," replied Harry Ledyard.

"No; I want more exercise than we can get walking back and forth here where it is so crowded, and I want to save your hand from being overworked by saluting every second."

When they had crossed the cemetery bridge, however, his excuses and reluctance to proceed were so evident that the girl stopped suddenly and faced him as she asked:

"What is the matter, Mr. Ledyard; perhaps you are tired of my company?"

"No, no, Miss Rollins," he protested eag-

erly, his face reddening; "it is only that I don't think we had better walk farther in this direction if you don't mind. There's something — going on this afternoon."

"What! a fight!" she exclaimed with interest. "Who?"

"That's telling," he answered teasingly. "Suppose I should tell you and you went and informed the 'Sup,' what a nice mess I should be in as a tale-bearer."

"Now, Mr. Ledyard," and she stood quite still in her indignation, fixing him with a glance which would have bored a hole through any craft less armor-plated than a midshipman, "do you imagine that I am that kind of a girl; if so, I think you had better not risk contaminating yourself by walking with me another step."

In order to make peace, and under a vow of absolute secrecy, Harry imparted to her the names of the contestants.

"What!" she cried out in astonishment, "those two great friends! What a shame!

What makes them do it? But I wish we could see them," she added, spurred by the impulse which sent women to tourneys in the Middle Ages and which sends them still to bull-fights.

Harry, of course, was obdurate to her pleadings, only promising to let her know the results at some future day.

To Geff, alone with Peyton, the walk to the appointed spot was the shortest and most unpleasant he had ever taken. The two days he had passed since his decision were ones he wished never to repeat. Even his regrets at what he had done receded into the background, his mind was so full of what was immediately ahead of him. In his overwrought imagination he had been seeing pools of blood in which two forms, his and Blake's, struggled and fell; and now he was trembling so that he feared the critical, disapproving eye of his second would notice it. He had sense enough, however, to keep silent, smiling grimly to himself at the thought of fate's irony in educating

in a nursery of war one so unfitted for the life that a boy's fight unmanned him. He was so angry with himself that, in a sense of divided personality, he took a certain cruel satisfaction in seeing the other self suffer.

As they passed a group of midshipmen he was conscious of their curious glances, and knew that they were rehearsing and discussing his case and speculating on his behavior. He drew himself up straighter and walked with a firmer step.

He found the spot well chosen, with several of his classmates posted at various points to give timely notice of any approaching officer. Blake, he saw, was already on the ground.

The sight of his sneering lips acted on Geff as a dash of cold water in the face of one about to faint. The trembling in his legs ceased suddenly, his eyes cleared, and his fists tightened. The boy before him was no longer his friend, but had become the personification of all he had undergone during the past ten days: his own inner regrets and mortification, the

contempt of his comrades, his miserable loneliness, and his grudge against life for neglecting to make him of the tougher fibre of his associates.

He looked to Peyton eagerly for commands. He was anxious to begin. He slipped off his blouse, and then, stripped to the waist, took his stand at the spot indicated, and at the word struck out before him with his fists. There was no strategy, no skill in his blows, and for that very reason his antagonist found it difficult to know how to anticipate them. His quickness made up to a certain extent for his lack of practice, and Blake, to his astonishment, felt his right ear hit by what seemed the revolving wings of a windmill before he had succeeded in landing a blow himself. Then the belated fist fell like a hammer on Geff's chest, felling him to the ground; but he recovered before the ten seconds were over and rose to his feet and stood wavering, physically, but mentally determined to go on with it.

A blow between his eyes blinded him, but a

moment later he felt his own knuckles hit something with a sharp impact and heard a cry of "Bully for you, Geff!" He hit out again wildly, with the vague feeling that his arm was moved by some other force than his own volition; but this time he failed to reach his adversary and instead something struck him again between the eyes. Then there was a pause which he resented. Why would they not allow him to continue while he was still able to see behind the mountain that was rapidly rising above his eyebrows?

Again he stood up; another blow on his chest stunned him, but angered him as well, arousing in him the intense desire to hit back as forcibly. He lunged forward, striking out with a strength that astonished him, and laughed aloud as he felt his fist graze a cheek.

He was putting up a fight that made the onlookers smile at its ineffectualness, and yet they could not but admire the spirit of it. But, of course, it was only a question of a few moments before the trained muscles should

conquer. Blake had held himself in, for, though he experienced no relenting towards his former friend, a sportsmanlike feeling made it impossible for him to take too great an advantage of Geff's lack of skill. One blow, carefully directed, now bowled Geff over in a moment's unconsciousness. It seemed to him ages before he struggled to his feet again and heard the seconds say, in voices which seemed to come from miles away, that the fight was over.

After shaking hands with some one whose face he could not see on account of the ever-increasing size of his swelling cheek, he let himself be led by the arm by Peyton through the dusk to the hospital. The surgeon in charge, who happened to be in, smiled as he beheld the figure before him.

"Will you please attend to Mr. Summers's eye, sir," said Peyton; "it seems to have something very curious the matter with it. I hope it is not contagious," he added, his own eye looking preternaturally solemn.

"I believe not," replied the young doctor,

himself not too far removed from boyhood to appreciate the situation. "It is a complaint never caught except in the hospital grounds, as I have discovered, and it seems to lose its virulency on this side of the bridge. I am not sure whether I ought not to make a report on this particular case, though," he added; "but as it seldom occurs a second time, perhaps it will do no harm to treat it and make no mention of it to those in authority. Let me see what I can do."

Various applications were made to reduce the swelling, but it was several days before Geff lost the variegated colors which adorned his countenance, and which he studied curiously before the mirror with the dispassionate interest of the artist.

CHAPTER X

ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

GEFF wondered if Blake would now return to his room, if a reconciliation would take place; but when no advances were made and things went on in the same old way, he did not experience the regret he had expected. Unlike most boys who go into a fight angry and when it is once over forget the quarrel, Geff had gone into the fight with no hard feeling, but had come out of it with a certain resentment against Blake. Therefore, he was not sorry that a few more days were to pass before he ate "humble pie" before Blake, because he was well aware that it was not so much the involuntary blow which the former had resented as his cheating and falsehood.

He hoped, however, that now he had satisfied the code of midshipman honor, he would be welcomed back by his comrades and received

with open arms, figuratively speaking. But his plucky, if unscientific, behavior during the fight had not succeeded in offsetting his reluctance to accept the challenge.

"Any dog will put up a fight when he is forced to it and can't get away," one of his classmates had commented when speaking of the matter.

So he still found himself kept in a modified Coventry, the inhabitants of which greeted him politely enough, but they did not request his presence at their merrymakings nor his help at any of their undertakings. He was treated as a stranger.

His pride was severely wounded. Could they know about his conduct in the classroom? No, of that he was sure; no one but Blake could have seen him, and Blake — on that he would stake his life — would never tell. Then it was simply that he had failed to reach the boyish standards of courage by which they walked.

Geff sat himself down to some serious

thinking and began to study himself as if he were some one else. He was on the road to failure, for if he let himself grow callous and willing to accept conditions now, he would always be content to do so in the future. If he ceased to mind what was thought of him now, he would always do so. Fighting in itself was not a good thing, but to avoid it from motives of cowardice and a womanish dislike of ugly physical results was worse; painting, music, and literature were the noblest outlets of the human mind, but to serve them faithfully and most effectually should not the man have been a boy once, have passed through the experiences of a normal boyhood? What were the standards, then, to which he must aspire if he remained at the Academy? — and though for a short time he had felt like leaving it and its robust life for one more congenial to his habits and tastes, he had put the temptation away from him, realizing that such a step would be desertion in the face of the enemy. No! he would stay and conquer, win his comrades'

approval. The standards, then, he summed up, were those of physical courage, physical and mental excellence, and a regard for truth.

He had sworn to himself that never again would he fail to observe the latter in word or spirit; and he saw that, if he was to keep away from the temptation to cheat, he must work harder at his studies. That was an easy matter, requiring only a little more application. Then came physical courage — how should he attain it? He had already discovered, as he had confided to Blake that tropical night on the Monongahela, that habit inured him to much that was painful and terrifying at first. How many things he could do now without a tremor that had first cost him so much misery! If this were so, then he must devote himself to as many physical exercises as he could in order to be prepared to meet the possible call on him from any direction; and then, out of them all, he must choose some one branch in which to excel. This latter he soon decided should be fencing — that appealed to him from its asso-

ciation with the romance of the sword; and he thought of Excalibur, of Roland's sword, and of those of all the hosts of chivalry.

The next day Geff set about carrying out his plans by spending extra time in the gymnasium, and on Wednesday, remembering that he had always been fleet of foot, he started over to the Government Farm, where he practiced sprinting between certain points. As he was doing this, some of the athletic committee chanced to pass by.

"See how Raff (shortened from Raphael on account of his love of drawing) runs," one exclaimed; "he ought to enter for the contest."

"I don't know," objected another; "he may flunk before the time comes. He's not a man you can rely on."

"Oh, well, let's give him a chance. Besides, running is n't like fighting."

"I'm willing enough."

"Here, Raff," they called out to him, "if you're such a greyhound you'd better join the contests. Will you enter?"

"All right," Geff answered curtly, in order not to show how pleased he was at this first advance from his classmates.

In the fencing lessons old Corbesier, the fencing-master, was delighted at Mr. Summers's ability in the noble art, and insisted on private bouts with him, his French and his steel flashing equally quick.

These two branches of the course which Geff had marked out for himself were easy and agreeable to him in themselves, though often he would have preferred to slip into the library and read, or sketch, or call on some of the girls. He knew, however, that his efforts must not stop there, and he devoted some of his time to boxing, which he hated; and he would even have joined the baseball team had there been a vacancy for him. He went out often in a boat, rowing himself up the river, where the beauty of the Academy grounds, as he looked back on them, and of the bay beyond and the wooded hills on both sides, made him forget that he was bent on duty instead of pleasure.

In spite of his theoretical knowledge of seamanship and his actual practice with large sails on shipboard, he was at first a little awkward in handling a small sailboat. Nevertheless he soon had remedied this, and many a Saturday afternoon he spent in this manner. In all this he was much alone. His classmates held him at a distance and he made no effort to come closer to them. He would not *creep* into their favor that he meant to *win* some day.

It was part, too, of his self-chosen routine to do with little feminine society. Though his unpopularity had spread to certain households where there were girls he had been in the habit of seeing a good deal, yet there were plenty of others where he was still sure of a welcome. But he had made up his mind that he would not be content to accept it until he had won back for himself the respect of his comrades and his own approbation. He had put himself, as it were, on probation.

"Funny, is n't it?" he said one day aloud to himself as he was rowing up the Severn, "how

I, who hate discipline, who rebel at it so, am disciplining myself harder than any of the instructors have ever succeeded in doing."

May had come again, and the days were so full of incident and color that no wonder those girls who were enjoying their first glimpse of the Naval Academy thought it the most glorious spot on earth. There were the drills on land and water to watch, the band at morning and evening to listen to, the walks in Lovers' Lane to be taken with the "one" or the many swains, the hops and the boating-parties.

The afternoon of the track athletics was one of the most interesting of all. The track by the side of the river was inclosed with row after row of light fluffy gowns, that looked all the lighter and fluffier by contrast with the dark-blue uniforms of the officers and midshipmen. A dress-jacket is not the coolest costume for a Maryland May, but what iconoclast would dream of doing away with the picturesqueness of its cut and color?

Lindsay Sidney was among those in the first row and one of the most enthusiastic spectators.

"There's only one thing I regret to-day," she said to a girl friend beside her, "and that is that they have allowed Geoffrey Summers to take part. I don't think a coward ought to be permitted to associate with brave men."

"How cruel you are, Lindsay," her gentler friend observed; "must you always keep a man down? Besides, they say he runs well."

"Of course," replied Lindsay scornfully, "a coward always does."

At that moment the games began. There were the one hundred yards dash, the two hundred and twenty, and the four hundred and forty yards run, and the victors were applauded enthusiastically.

"Oh, now comes Blake's first event," cried Lindsay excitedly; "he's in for two."

It was the pole-vault, and when the sturdy, well-built, frank-looking fellow jumped ten feet and three-fourths inches, a half-inch

higher than his nearest competitor, Lindsay did not attempt to contain herself, but called out, much to the amusement of those around her, "Bully for you, Blake!"

Harry Ledyard, in trying to make the standing high kick, lost his balance and fell over backwards, but received the laughter of the spectators as good-naturedly as a clown at a circus and grinned and bowed to all sides.

There were six entries for the mile run — among them Blake McIntosh and Geoffrey Summers. It was not until he had seen the printed programmes that Geff knew that Blake was to compete with him. Five of the contestants were prettly evenly matched, the other having twisted his ankle at the first lap; but two gradually fell behind, leaving the race between Blake, Peyton, and Geff. Then Peyton lost ground, and Geff, hearing Blake's heavier breathing, was sure that the race was his.

He knew how Blake hated to lose in anything and wished that they had not been entered together. "If I were the hero of a

Sunday-School story," he thought to himself, as he ran easily and lightly, unconscious of fatigue, "I should let Blake win; but I have n't any intention of being magnanimous to that extent, so here goes," — and giving an extra spurt forward he left the panting Blake far behind and finished his mile in five minutes, nineteen and four-fifths seconds, beating the Academy record. There was much cheering and clapping of hands, but Geff felt instinctively that the greater part of this was done by the visitors, and that it was not so genuine nor so prolonged as that accorded by their home contingent to the other victors.

Blake and Peyton shook hands with him, but the former said nothing, and, though there were a number of girls who tried to catch his eye and smile, Geff slipped hurriedly away to change his clothes.

Though he had tried to pretend that he had ceased to care how Blake acted to him, this first approach, perfunctory as it was, made him unhappy when he contrasted it with the former

"BULLY FOR YOU, BLAKE!"

state of affairs between them. He knew that Blake still distrusted his honesty. He had passed so brilliantly in all his examinations that Blake, not knowing of his new habits of study, had, he felt sure, attributed his high marks to continued cheating. He had grown proud in the months which had followed the quarrel and fight, and would not now deign to explain to Blake how far he had left his former weakness behind him. Let Blake misunderstand, until some day he would be forced to realize the change. Yet all the same, his triumph was a hollow one to him with no one with whom to share it. He had discovered, however, a new joy in life — the delight of muscles which obey; during the race he had felt an exhilaration in the swift motion of his own body such as he had never before experienced.

CHAPTER XI

BLAKE IN LOVE

THE summer cruise that year was along the Atlantic coast from Norfolk to Newport. There was work a-plenty, but also much recreation. At Newport, Captain McIntosh, now on shore duty and stationed at the Torpedo School, with a sister to keep house for him, entertained his son and son's classmates in a most generous fashion.

"Why have you never brought your friend Geff?" he asked his son one day, having heard so much of his boy's roommate and nothing of the estrangement between them.

"Oh, we are n't chums any longer," replied Blake, and that was all his father was able to get from him on the subject.

But Geff, to whom Captain McIntosh had been pointed out, looked at him on shore and

on the Bancroft with great interest, finding in him his ideal of an officer.

Geff enjoyed the cruise more than any previous experience since he had entered the Academy. His classmates were forgetting their feeling against him; he showed his interest in all that concerned them, was bright and amusing, and though he made no special effort to conciliate them, he found that his popularity had almost returned.

Blake also got full measure of pleasure from the cruise, — the visits at different navy yards, in some of which he had formerly lived, and his month of leave spent with his father at the Torpedo Station, with all the interest of the laboratory, the harbor with its fleet of pleasure yachts, and the beautiful, fascinating town of Newport. It was only when he thought of Geff that his brow clouded and his face grew stern; but there was not much time to dwell on the disillusion which had hurt him more than any one knew, or in fact on anything but the happiness of each day. Added to all this

was the presence of Lindsay Sidney, who was also visiting at the Torpedo Station. The trouble was that the days, weeks, and month were too short to get in all that they wanted to do. As was natural to them both, their existence during the day was an amphibious one; and at night there were often little dances at Goat Island or at Fort Adams.

The first day of October had come. Blake returned to Annapolis and to his room with Harry Ledyard. Geff had spent his vacation with his mother at a relative's cottage in Maine. He had fallen very naturally back into the old luxurious and easy-going habits, and now on his return, as there was no one especially hearty welcome, he felt his old dislike of the place and life come back, and rebelled again against the discipline from within and without which he knew awaited him.

Hard work followed for every one: the standard of the class was high.

"I might have been a star," declared Harry Ledyard in a mock heroic manner, "if I had

entered another class; here I have to work myself to death only to keep from slipping out at the tail end."

But there was play also. The autumn football season was soon under way, and Geff, in accordance with his decision to leave no branch of athletics untried, had volunteered as one of the substitute team called "The Hustlers"; but as there were many others far better qualified for that position, his services were not required. He took only a vicarious part in the various games, watching with great interest Blake's good plays and kicks.

There was no more interested onlooker or ardent supporter of the team's reputation than Lindsay Sidney. She knew the height and exact weight and capacity of each man on it and the chances of each game with other colleges. Mr. and Mrs. Sidney, coming upon her and Blake one evening seated on the well-worn sofa in the hall, saw the most abjectly miserable couple they had ever beheld.

"What is the matter, children?" Mrs.

Sidney asked in real sympathy; "what is the matter? You're not worrying about the exams yet, are you, Blake?" — for she was used to his periodic fears.

"Oh, mother, don't you know?" replied Lindsay, in a mournful tone, as tragic as one a survivor of the Old Guard might have used at a similar question after the defeat of Waterloo; "don't you know that Princeton's beat us sixteen to nothing? It's too awful; and if Blake had only been able to get in his drop kick the day might have been saved."

Mrs. Sidney walked away, feeling powerless in the face of such a tragedy.

It was the last game of the season, a week later. The mild early winter day was beautiful, perhaps more so even than one in spring. Though the crowd that attended the game was smaller than the one at the June Week performances, it was more a home crowd from the Academy and Annapolis, with a few friends from the visiting college. The game had been well contested, but this time Blake

had succeeded in getting in his famous "drop kick" and had made three goals for his side. It was growing desperate for the others, who used every subtlety and every trick they knew. Blake found himself borne down by a rush of opponents before he could kick the ball which would have finished the game, and Lindsay and Geff, whose eyes had been fixed on him, drew in their breath when they saw him extricated from the human ant-heap and carried off the field. Mrs. Sidney's restraining hand alone kept Lindsay from springing up and rushing to him; but Geff, nearer the spot where Blake had fallen, ran to see what had happened and to offer his aid. He found him lying on the grass where they had put him down as he fainted. It was luckily nothing very serious, the doctor said, a wrenched collar-bone and numerous bruises. When he opened his eyes, he saw Geff leaning over him.

"What's up, Geff?" he asked in his old tone, unable for the moment to understand; then, with the return of full consciousness, his

brow knit and he turned away, saying: "Get me over to the hospital, will you, Peyton!"

Geff walked off, out of the gate into the town, where he wandered about until formation, alone, angry, and hurt.

This incident put an end to his hope of winning back Blake's trust and respect. "Let him think what he likes!" he said to himself.

As the winter approached, while still faithful to his plan of athletic development, he found less to do in that direction and felt at liberty to allow himself some distractions in the way of feminine society. He imagined himself in love several times, and was rather disgusted at the ease and rapidity with which one flame supplanted another in what he thought a faithful heart. For the time being each star in the ascendant guided as well as lighted him, and his different activities during the winter were easily explained by a knowledge of the different girls' tastes. On account of a Baltimore belle, the perfection of elegance in dress, he gained numerous demerits by appearing in

non-regulation blouses and dress-jackets, ordered surreptitiously from a tailor in town, because he felt that those manufactured by the firm which supplied the midshipmen by contract were not perfect enough in fit; for another little girl just out of a convent school, he parted with his belt buckle and numerous buttons which made their appearance transformed into gold-plated hat-pins. One soft-eyed maiden was "fond of art and literature," intending to become a painter, great poet, or actress as the Fates should decree, and for her he painted a sketch of the old gymnasium, once Fort Severn, and wrote several sentimental verses, one of which, signed with his name, having fallen from his pocket, was found and read aloud one evening to a delighted audience of his classmates, who continued at every opportunity to recite bits of it to the blushing author. The good-natured manner in which he took their teasing helped to strengthen his now well-grounded popularity.

While Geff worshiped at many shrines,

Blake was faithful at one. Lindsay, however, though she looked upon Blake as a dear friend, — one who had taken, as it were, the place of the vainly desired brother, — and was always ready with interest and sympathy in all that concerned him, did not view their friendship in any sentimental light.

"You will marry me, won't you, Lindsay?" Blake had asked her as they strolled one gray December day along the sea-wall.

"Indeed, I don't know," she answered in so matter-of-fact a voice that Blake could not help being aware of the untouched state of her heart. "To begin with, we are both of us too young to think of such a thing yet. I am very fond of you, you know, Blake, but I like a number of other men, and I might find some one I liked better before the time came." (At least there was some consolation in the implied non-existence of such a person at present.) "Of course, I shall marry a naval officer some day; imagine me a 'cit's' wife! And suppose I should promise you and you

should 'bilge,' then where should we be? So don't be silly, Blake."

"You'll go with me to the Christmas hop?" he asked, longing for a crumb, at least, since the whole loaf was refused him.

"No, I can't," she answered; "I am going with Peyton; but I'll dance with you three times."

And with this great concession Blake was forced to content himself; and though he often felt like fighting his classmates when he found them dancing with Lindsay, or dining or talking with her in the hospitable house in Blake Row, he plucked up courage from the knowledge that none was permanently preferred before him, and that once his epaulettes were on his shoulders, he stood as good a chance as any of winning her.

A superintendent of the Naval Academy once said that he would have no trouble managing the boys if it were not for their mothers, meaning that these worried both their sons and the officers in regard to a thousand

matters of discipline and studies. But he might far more truly have specified "girls" instead. It is safe to say that if one part of a midshipman's brain were not full of hops, "dates," flirting, etc., there would be an increase of gray matter to be devoted to mathematics and physics. But a boy, no more than a man, — still less, in fact, — is meant to be a thinking machine only.

Peyton — "F.F.V.," as he was nicknamed — was truly a descendant of his Virginia Cavalier forefathers, eager in love and war. And though fists took the place of swords, the principle was the same. He was the oldest in his class, and had fallen in love. This time it was no case of flirting, for he had had no thought of any other girl since he had known Jessie.

He had long since got over his disgust at Geff's reluctance to fight, as he saw what efforts the latter had made to gain the physical development that had begun so naturally for himself when, at five years of age, he was

put on a horse and made to ride it. He often went to Geff's room and talked with him of Jessie and their future prospects, admitting that they were engaged.

One evening he came in during study period and, shutting the door, said in an excited voice: —

"Will you stand by me, Raff? I'm going to get married."

"What's up, F.V.," cried Geff, in astonishment; "what are you gassing about?"

"Jessie's brother and sister with whom she lives, you know, are going out to Dakota to farm, and she with them. I don't dare to let her get that far off from me without anything to hold her for so long. If she is my wife, it will be different." He spoke hurriedly, fearing that any minute the discipline officer might enter and find him out of his own room during study period.

"But you know very well you can't marry," Geff objected; "there's the regulation against it."

"You're a pretty one to talk of regulations, are n't you?" Peyton retorted, "when you've broken every other one here? I'm willing enough to risk it, and I'm going to get married next Saturday if I can find a minister; the Annapolis ones won't perform the ceremony. Now, will you help me, Raff, or won't you?"

"You are a fool to run the risk of dismissal, but if you mean to be one, of course, I'll do what I can for you. What am I to be, maid-of-honor or best man?"

It was Jessie herself who procured the minister, a cousin from the country, ignorant of the law which prohibits the marriage of midshipmen. A friend offered her house for the occasion, as it was decided that the brother and sister should know nothing of the matter until it was over. The license was procured from an obliging official who was pleased to close his eyes to any unusual features in the case; and Geff had bought the ring and ordered flowers and refreshments sent to the friend's house. There were only the five of them pres-

ent, as every extra person admitted to the secret increased the risk of detection. The bride was to travel West the next day to wait until the sailor husband was free to claim her openly.

In spite of the flowers and the girls' freshness and dainty gowns, the ceremony was rather a sad one: the cousin was beginning to have suspicions and qualms; the bride was a little frightened, and Geff and the friend felt the absence of all the congratulations and good wishes which should have been her lot. Peyton alone was happy, forgetting for the moment the long separation ahead of them. When the ceremony was over and the refreshments eaten, the married pair started off for a walk by themselves, as it was the only time they could secure a chance to talk undisturbed. She was to tell her brother what she had done as soon as they left Annapolis.

Geff and the girl friend chatted for a few minutes regarding the chance of the affair's leaking out, but they thought the danger

slight. They failed to reckon, however, on a talkative official in a small town, and in less than a week the matter was brought to the ears of the Superintendent. Peyton was questioned and confessed, only refusing to tell the name of the classmate who had helped him. In a short time the authorities in Washington were communicated with, and he was dismissed from the Service. With a well-to-do father, who was able to tide him over financially until he got started in some business, and, with the immediate prospects of a slightly belated honeymoon, Peyton was perhaps not punished as severely as he deserved.

To some of the midshipmen he appeared in the light of a martyr to love slain by a hard-hearted Government that takes no account of natural affections. Geff was surprised to find that he did not regard him in this light at all, and remembered that only a few months ago he would have applauded this defiance of discipline. It made him realize how great was the change in himself. Now, though he often

broke the regulations, it was from carelessness or relapses into old habits, seldom the result of systematic rebellion against authority. His great fear now was that his part in the affair might be discovered.

CHAPTER XII

RECONCILIATION

GEOFFREY had now come to look upon the estrangement between Blake and himself as permanent and endeavored to forget its cause and their former happy intimacy. There were times, however, when Blake's avoidance of him was so apparent to all that it made him uncomfortable, owing to the questions to which it gave rise among their classmates. At such times he liked best to escape by himself.

One Saturday afternoon in March a number of the boys had decided, "just for a change," to take a walk over Long Bridge into the country. When Blake came up and found that Geff was to be one of the party, his hesitation was visible to all.

"I think I prefer to go sailing, after all," exclaimed Geff over his shoulder, as he turned away, his heart and pride sore.

It was not the best afternoon for such an amusement, although there were a couple of white sails in the river and bay. There was an almost summer warmth in the air, but the gusts of wind were fitful and strong. A year before Geff would not have ventured out in a boat at such a time, but he had gained confidence both in his own ability and in the buoyancy of water, having discovered that it was the rule that a boat should float, and the exception that she should sink, whereas when he first began to handle one he had believed that it was exactly the reverse.

The flashing of the water and the freshness of the breeze and the flapping of the sails that afternoon exhilarated him so that all unpleasant thoughts were swept behind as fast as the receding shore.

The wind continued to strengthen and the little boat obeyed him so thoroughly that for the first time he experienced a keen feeling of comradeship with the wind, instead of opposition — were they not working together? A cer-

tain insight was his that moment, illuminating and sudden. If one then learned to work *with* great forces, instead of against them, would not all fear in danger disappear? He did not attempt to think out exactly where this theory might lead him; he only knew that it gave him a confidence in himself and in the future. But he had little time for reverie; all his attention was needed to keep his course.

He was already heading westward again, was within a few hundred yards of the sea-wall, when he caught sight of another sailboat to the southeast, with a sail flapping wildly in the wind. Evidently the sheet had slipped out of the hand of her skipper, and Geff, looking to find out who it was that had let himself get into such straits, saw that there were two girls in the boat. Just as that moment a gust of wind, with all the force of the Atlantic aerial currents behind it, struck the little catboat, and to Geff's horror he saw it keel completely over. He put his own boat about instantly, glancing anxiously towards the Academy grounds to

see who else had witnessed the accident and was coming to the rescue. There was no sign of a human being nearer than the band in the distance, whose gay march rang out ironically in its indifference. It was from him alone, then, that help must come, — if it were not already too late, — for he was still far from being a swift swimmer, and now he would be terribly hampered by his clothes. He could not let go of his own sheet long enough even to loosen his boots.

He tacked about, and as the sail swung over, he caught sight of the capsized boat, its white sail lashing the water like the wing of a struggling, dying gull. Straining his eyes, he made out one head above water and arms hanging over the keel, but there was no sign of the other girl. He shouted out, for her back was towards him, that she might know that help was coming. Oh! if only one of his classmates were with him! How could he be equal to the emergency alone?

Then, floating behind the stern, he caught

sight of a second figure. If she could only keep up long enough — if both could keep up a little longer — perhaps he might be able to save them.

He brought his boat up as near to the catboat as possible, then sprang overboard, swimming for the floating girl. His clothes clung to him like the wrappings of a mummy and seemed to be dragging him down; still he struck out with all his force, and in three or four strokes had reached her. She caught hold of his shoulder convulsively, but he shouted out sternly: —

"Stop that and put your hand on my arm and don't struggle, or I'll let you go."

Luckily she had sense enough left to obey, and after a few moments, when the distance between them and his own boat seemed to lengthen instead of diminish, they reached it and he clambered aboard after helping her over the side. Putting the sheet into her hands and bidding her hold it tight, he dived back again into the water, swimming towards the capsized boat.

The slippery keel was evidently offering little hold for the girl's exhausted hands, and the wind had loosened her hair, flapping it over her eyes so that she had not seen him until he appeared at her side. He hung there hoping to get the moment's rest he so needed.

But there was no time for that: his own boat was getting farther away; so, bidding her put her hands on his shoulder, he drew her roughly away from the boat to which she clung instinctively, and swam, slowly, more and more slowly, feeling that every stroke was his last, until with a final spurt he reached the boat and dragged her and himself on board.

He was so exhausted with his effort, so cold and shaking, that for a moment he did not see who it was he had rescued until he crawled into the stern and seized the tiller, when he heard some one say: "I'll manage the sheet, Mr. Summers," and recognized Lindsay Sidney.

Then she began to laugh nervously.

"You've saved our lives; I could n't have floated five minutes longer and I guess Lucy

was done for, too. But had n't we better tack again? Let's get back as soon as possible before we catch pneumonia or the whole Academy is on the sea-wall to meet us."

They were nearing it rapidly now and the danger was over. Geff tried to speak naturally, to ask how the disaster had occurred, for he knew that Lindsay was usually a good sailor.

"Oh! I let Lucy try her hand at sailing," she replied to his inquiry with chattering teeth; "of course, it's all my fault for letting her do it just when the wind was so fresh, and she was n't quick enough, so over we went. And oh, Raff" — she had not spoken to him except a necessary salutation since the day of the fight, asking no reason for Blake's dislike, but following him in his avoidance of his former friend — "suppose you had n't been there. Indeed, indeed! we are grateful, are n't we, Lucy?"

But Lucy, who had been brave while she had to, was now crying and chattering and unable to reply.

By this time they had reached the sea-wall, and a crowd of persons who had suddenly caught sight of the overturned boat and the one returning, had rushed down to meet them. Geff hurriedly escaped from the questioners, only anxious to get beyond sight and hearing and into dry clothes. But Lindsay, though some of her friends were trying to lead her off for the same purpose, refused to stir until she had told all the details of the accident and the rescue. Her remorse for the way she had misjudged Geff, the manner in which she had often spoken of him as a coward, gave to her gratitude a ringing note of enthusiasm.

On their way home the pedestrians were met with the story of the afternoon's mishap.

"Raff Summers!" cried several in astonishment, and then, as if ashamed of their surprise, could not say enough in praise of his deed.

Blake's voice was the loudest of all. His nature was a generous one and he was always quick to express his admiration of any act of bravery.

"Who were the girls?" he asked.

"Lucy Perrell and Lindsay Sidney."

"Lindsay!" he cried, and it was as if a cold hand had gripped his heart. "How is she? How are they?" he added.

Forgetting formation, discipline, demerits, he was off on a run to the Sidneys' quarters, when Mr. Sidney met him.

"How is she?" he cried breathlessly.

"Perfectly well, but her mother has put her to bed, as a precaution, or punishment for her poor seamanship, I don't know which," he said, laughing. "I am on my way to thank Mr. Summers."

Blake accompanied him, his conscience all astir. The officer of the day told them Mr. Summers had been sent to the hospital, feverish and suffering from exhaustion, and that the doctor would allow him to see no one that night.

Blake went through some unpleasant hours in self-questioning, for it was several days before any one was allowed to see Geff.

Though no real illness resulted, he still continued feverish and nervous, and he dreaded the thought of having to be the recipient of praise and congratulations. It was really at his request, more than from any necessity, that the doctors still refused admittance to visitors. His room, however, was full of flowers sent by the Sidneys, Perrells, and others.

Several days later Mr. Sidney was admitted, bringing with him all kinds of messages from his wife and Lindsay; and that afternoon, after he had recovered somewhat from a visit of the Superintendent, whose kind words had embarrassed him, Blake entered.

Geff rose, and stood waiting, not knowing what to say or do.

Blake held out his hand.

"Will you forgive me and let bygones be bygones, Raff?" he asked, in a voice that was scarcely audible.

"Of course, old fellow," and the four hands clasped in an eloquent grip.

"I owe you more than I can ever pay,

Raff," said Blake, after a moment's silence, standing by the window with his back to the room.

"Nonsense, some one would soon have seen them and gone for them; but I don't mind your thinking so, all the same; it make us a little more even, for I have always owed you a lot, Blake. I — I shan't try to say what I wanted when you refused to listen, and this is the only time you'll ever hear me speak of the matter; but you must know that I'm done with such things once and for all."

Then, to relieve the tension, Blake began to deliver the messages with which he had been charged: "Graveyard wants to know if you prefer a statue erected at the sea-wall to commemorate the event, or whether you will have a battleship named after you."

Then they sat and talked of indifferent matters, still somewhat embarrassed by the ghost of the long silence between them.

"There goes the 'gyrene's' bugle; I must be off to formation," said Blake, getting up.

"You'll be back to-morrow, the doctor says. Shall I move my traps back to the old room? And remember, Sunday we're both expected at the Sidneys' for dinner."

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPY

NEVER in his life had Geff been so happy as he was during the weeks that followed. He had grown accustomed to the life; and there was the companionship of Blake, Lindsay's sisterly affection, the various games and boat-races, and his own physical development to occupy his time and interest. He was now champion fencer and long-distance runner. The fencing team had been away once to New York and had brought back victory on the point of its foils. He had not been appointed one of the class petty officers — "his sleeve was disgracefully bare," said Harry Ledyard, as he caressed affectionately the "buzzard" (the eagle, insignia of the class petty officers) on his own arm; but as he had never striven for that distinction, he did not miss it.

It was the year 1898, and there was a stirring

in two continents, a darkening of the bright international sky by the clouds of approaching war. The news of the destruction of the Maine had filled the Academy with a horror that was very personal, for some of the officers had been stationed there before the beginning of their fateful cruise.

As the weeks passed those who hoped for war and those who prayed that peace might continue grew more anxious at the delay. Officers and midshipmen discussed the chances at the club and in the quarters, and it was harder than ever to keep minds on purely theoretical studies, though drills were regarded as more immediately necessary as a preparation for what might be coming.

Geff nearly caused a reversal of his newly won popularity by saying: "Oh! I hope there won't be any war. I've been in Spain and I like the country and the people. There are few finer men in the world than the Spanish dons."

"That's all right," exclaimed Blake, as they

were practicing pistol-shooting; "you want to be able to respect your enemy even if you don't love him."

"And do you suppose there's any chance of their letting us go even if war is declared?" asked Harry anxiously.

"My father says," began Blake — for Captain McIntosh had been down to the Academy on a short visit to the Sidneys — "my father says that we shall have to have more officers and that there is n't the slightest doubt but the first class is likely to be ordered off at any moment, and that we, too, will probably go later."

"But I don't want to wait," exclaimed Harry, "until all the laurels are picked — banana leaves I suppose they'd have to be in Cuba. I want to fight the dons, 'singe the beard of the King of Spain,' and win the gold of the Spanish Main," he added in a singsong as he strode about in a mock savage manner.

"Well, we'll telegraph poor little Alfonso to wait until your own grows," said Geff, "and

then you and he can have a beard-pulling and singeing contest."

But Harry was not destined to wait as long as that. War was declared in April; the first class was ordered off amid the cheers and envy of the other midshipmen and the cheers and tears of the girls they left behind them.

For a while, however, the second class, now become the first, had to wait until matters should grow more acute. There were few, indeed, who did not dream of distinguishing themselves in the campaign, and there was a markedly increased interest in the Spanish lessons that astonished the instructors.

There was none more determined to win a name and fame for himself than Harry Ledyard. Brought up on a diet of Henty's books, in which the boyish hero always saves the day for King or Commander-in-Chief by his bravery and cunning, he felt certain that his own time would come, and he made up his mind to let no chance escape him.

One Sunday evening as he was returning

alone to Old Quarters, after dining with friends in town, he noticed a figure in the dark, crouching down by the side of the chapel. His curiosity was at once aroused. He approached as silently as he could, walking on the grass, that he might make no noise and that he might be hidden by the shadows of the trees. He was almost abreast of the chapel when the man rose suddenly to his feet and ran rapidly down Blake Row. It was too dark to make out more than the outlines, but Harry was certain that the man wore no uniform. There was no chance of catching up with him, so Harry walked up to the spot to see if there were anything to throw light on the situation. There was to him something so furtive in the man's flight that Harry went back to the gate and asked the sentry if he had seen any stranger in the grounds. No one, however, at all suspicious-looking had come through the gate, he was informed.

The memory of the incident came back to him several times the next day, although he

did not mention it to any one. The next night, as he was looking out from his window at the back of the quarters, he caught sight of a man crouched down by the sea-wall, and he felt certain that it was the same he had seen the night before. He rushed downstairs and crept swiftly towards him, but the quick ears of the man caught the crunching of the gravel long before Harry got up with him. This time, however, an electric light fell upon the face, making plain a dark skin, though not that of a negro, and features which were undoubtedly those of a "dago" of some sort, Harry was sure.

What could be the reason for the man's queer behavior? Then, suddenly, it came to him — of course, he was a Spanish spy — probably engaged in making drawings of the Academy for the use of his countrymen who were planning to invade it, or perhaps he was himself getting ready to destroy it.

Harry's first idea was to go at once to the Superintendent and tell him of his discovery;

his second was to keep the matter to himself and to catch the spy red-handed in the very act, thus covering himself with glory. Further thought on the subject led him to the conclusion that it would be necessary to confide the secret to some one, as it would be impossible for him to keep the whole Academy grounds under his personal supervision.

That evening he called a secret meeting in his room. There were present Blake, Geoffrey, and two other of his most intimate chums. After he had told them of his suspicions, he asked their aid. They were naturally much excited and interested.

"We must divide up the grounds and assign a particular territory to each one of us," suggested Blake.

"And when under the sun are we to find time to patrol it?" asked Jim.

"During study hours, of course," replied Geff ironically.

"And suppose we are seen by the sentries?" asked "Peach" the careful.

"Run for it," answered Harry shortly. "And look here, you're vowed to secrecy, remember, and no one talks until I give the word."

So it was agreed. Although ten eyes kept as careful a watch during the day as possible, it was only at night that the real work began. The Old Quarters, always occupied by the second class alone, gave them greater measure of freedom from observation than had been possible in the larger building.

Several times the same suspicious figure was seen at a distance in the dark, but when the amateur detective approached, it disappeared into the shadow of one of the buildings or behind some post on the wharf and vanished. There were nocturnal meetings to report observations, but there was nothing substantial to show for all the activity of the anti-conspirators except certain demerits received for having been absent from rooms without leave during study period. Still, each one of them except Peach had caught at least a

glimpse of the spy, and the accumulation of such bits of evidence might amount to enough to warrant reporting the affair to those in authority, suggested Blake. But Harry opposed this course, recalling to them their promise, and recommending renewed diligence.

It was on Saturday evening after a hop, when Harry and Jim were returning to their quarters, that their vigilance was rewarded. Several officials from the Navy Department had arrived from Washington that day and were staying with the Superintendent. It was reported among the midshipmen that they had come down for the discussion of grave matters relative to the war — perhaps about the fortification of Annapolis, or the sending of the whole battalion to the front. A number of reporters had tried to interview the party on its way down and others had tried to extract a grain of news from the Superintendent, but had got nothing for their pains.

Harry and Jim, making one of the long détours which had become their habit during

these nights of reconnaissance, passed behind the Superintendent's house and wondered how the conference going on inside the room, the light of which was streaming out in a golden lane over the grass, making the shadows darker on either side, was to affect their own fate.

Just then, in the shadow beneath a bush to the right of the window, they caught sight of a crouching figure. There was no need for a word; both had seen it at the same moment, and, moved by the same impulse, crept silently forward. The man, feeling rather than hearing their approach, rose to his feet, and was about to run when the two boys fell upon and on top of him like dogs on a rabbit.

"Hold him, Jim!" cried Harry breathlessly, while the man, muttering in Spanish, struggled to escape. "Do you think you can hold him until I get the sentry. Has he got any weapons?"

"No, I can't hold him alone, he's too

strong; he's slipping away now!" cried Jim. "Both of us'll have to hang on until some one comes."

But the scuffle had been heard in the room above; the window opened and the Superintendent himself put out his head.

"What is the meaning of this disturbance?" he called out in a stern voice.

"A spy, sir," answered Harry, his voice trembling with excitement.

In a moment the orderly had run around from the front of the house and the Superintendent had called out: —

"Who are you?"

"Ledyard and Manning, sir, second-classmen," answered Harry.

"Come in at once, and Harding" — this to the orderly — "keep the man in the hall until I ring."

The two boys found themselves before the Superintendent and four officers whose names they well knew. Papers and drawings lay scattered about on the table, and several little

piles of tobacco ashes told that the meeting had already lasted several hours.

"Tell me your story, gentlemen," said the Superintendent, after he had politely asked them to sit down. Harry, as spokesman by right of discovery, began. He told of his first suspicions, of the organization of the detective squad, of the final discovery of the spy just beneath the window, and of his Spanish ejaculations when captured.

The officers looked grave. It was a time when unusual things might happen, were *likely* to happen. The Superintendent rang the bell sharply and Harding entered with the spy.

"Pablo!" exclaimed the Superintendent in amazement; "what does this mean?"

Now that for the first time they saw him in the light, the boys recognized the spy as the Superintendent's butler, a Spaniard or Cuban, who had waited on them once at dinner when they had been guests in the house. It was even more thrilling to think that the danger had been so close to them all the time.

All turned to look at the spy. His head hung down and his fingers twitched, and he turned as if the gaze of all his judges was too much for him.

"Explain, Pablo," said the Superintendent curtly; "what are you doing under the window here to-night?"

"Your Excellency," stammered the butler, "I — I — am ashamed to say."

"I am glad that you have that much grace," growled the Superintendent, "but go on."

The man, seeing there was no help for it, began his confession.

"Your Excellency knows that I am very lonely here in this place where I have no friends or compatriots, and since the war began and people in the town call me Spaniard and other unrespectful names, though God, He knows, I trust your people sweep them all into the sea and give us back our Cuba libre. As I say, gentlemen, I am lonely, and I seek a friend. Here is no woman to love me; I have tried, but" — with an expressive, deprecating gesture of the hands he drew attention to his

ugly visage — "they none can care for the 'dago.' And so there is but Puss, so white and dainty, that I have brought into the pantry, that sits on my knees and purrs as if she loved me, that I love as if it were my own little baby. But, sirs, puss cats will go out and will run away, and I am ever fearful that Blanca will slip off some night to one of the ships and leave me again a lonely bachelor. And so, since I do have confess my silliness, my love for Puss have take me out at nights frequently, to hunt for her and bring her back home. I have hide in dark corners, looking for her, for I will not be laugh at. The laughter does hurt me too much, and when I have see anybody coming I have run quickly. It is only to-night that I have chased the naughty Blanca all the way from the wall by the sea to the burying-ground and then back again to this hole beneath your window, where she have sat to get a mouse just inside, and I have sat outside to get her. And then these two gentlemen have caught me as perhaps Blanca

have already caught the mouse; but I have meant no harm, your Excellency, gentlemen, no harm, and please do not laugh at me and my silliness too much."

But this was too much to ask of human nature; and though the laugh was not more at Pablo than at themselves, the boys, the situation in general, the older men, even Harding the orderly, forgetting discipline, broke out into guffaws and chuckles. When it had subsided, Pablo was dismissed to return to his search for Blanca, and the Superintendent, turning to the two boys, whose faces were red with mortification, said, still smiling: "Thank you for your zeal, young gentlemen, although the results of it have not been quite what you expected. I do not give you the advice which Talleyrand gave to the young diplomat: 'No zeal, sir, no zeal,' for I am sure that it is one of the most valuable qualities an officer can have; and we all thank you and your fellow detectives for laying bare this dangerous plot."

Then, shaking hands with the boys, who wished that the floor would open to receive them, he bade them good-night, his smile helping somewhat to mitigate the embarrassment of the situation.

CHAPTER XIV

WAR EXPERIENCES

NATURALLY the story got abroad, and the "detectives" were unmercifully teased about their capture of the dangerous spy. But this episode was soon driven out of every one's mind by the arrival of the long-wished-for orders to the front.

Now came hurried farewells to families near enough for such trying ordeals (for the consolation of looking into the future and knowing how short and bloodless the war was to be was not given to weeping mothers, sisters, and sweethearts); letters and telegrams to the dear ones too far away to be seen before departure; and packing, and the comparison of orders to battleships, cruisers, and gunboats at Santiago or on the blockade off Havana. Those who like Blake had been ordered to the former commis-

erated those who had not drawn the biggest prizes.

There was no peace for the Academy nor for old Annapolis, now thoroughly aroused from her slumbers, until the last of the happy warriors was off on his way South. Then the town settled down to its usual summer drowsiness, awakened only fitfully by news from the seat of war.

All of the class started off together for Florida, separating on arrival at Key West, where they were dispersed among the fleet, each midshipman bringing aboard with him so much enthusiasm that, were it not for its buoyancy, the ships must have been sunk by this cargo.

Blake fell into his place with ease, requiring less adjustment than most of his classmates; perhaps he had inherited an adaptability to naval life. He was zealous and faithful and as useful as every small individual screw is to the whole of the vessel. His efficiency and zeal were noted by his superior officers, some of

whom had known him since he was a baby; and the Captain's recommendation of him on his report when he returned to the Academy was of the highest.

There fell to him, however, no great chance to distinguish himself in any spectacular manner. Yet he was content, since he helped, though in a humble way, to bring about the victory of Santiago.

Never as long as he lived would he forget the thrill when his eyes, among the first in the fleet, caught sight, against the brilliant Cuban hills, of a tiny puff of smoke at the narrow exit of the harbor. There was no need to explain what was happening, no need for orders — this moment had been long planned for, hoped for. The Maria Teresa was leading the Spanish fleet, determined to seek an honorable if hopeless end to its captivity.

In spite of his excitement and the deafening roar of the guns, Blake's orders were heard as distinctly as at an Academy drill, and his gun crew asserted, though it would be difficult to

prove it, that they made the greatest number of hits. It seemed impossible to Blake that a battle of such tremendous consequences, which decided such momentous issues, should be over in little more than an hour and a half, although the Colon kept up her flight for nearly two hours more before she finally hauled down her colors some forty-five miles west of the Morro.

Harry Ledyard had felt insulted when he was assigned to a collier and was thoroughly disgusted that he stood no chance of participating in active hostilities. But as there was no one to listen to his grumblings, and as he found his days full of work which proved interesting in spite of his disappointment, he adapted himself to his new surroundings. He was soon writing home to his mother humorous accounts of his almost continual blackened aspect due to frequent taking on and giving out of coal, emphasizing the great importance of this "sinew of war" and of the rapidity with which his division handled it. He enjoyed to the full the trips back and forth between

Norfolk and Guantanamo, where the battleships coaled in feverish haste in the latter magnificent landlocked harbor. There was no time now to linger when the blockades of Havana and Santiago were to be enforced and when a battle might occur at any moment.

He kept his eyes open, too, for the mythical Spanish fleet supposed to be lurking at so many different points, and was greatly excited at the report that his ship, the Scindia, was to be made the flagship of a fleet of colliers which was to accompany Commodore Watson on his proposed raid against the Spanish coast. There was, after all, no lack of excitement in his present life, and he looked back on his existence at the Academy with a pitying feeling for the untried, ignorant youth he fancied himself to have been, now that a scarcity of officers threw upon him duties which in ordinary times would not have fallen to his share for months to come.

While Harry was getting a few hours' sleep between coaling at Guantanamo, Geff was pacing the deck of a gunboat, one of the squadron

that was blockading Havana. No lights shone from Morro Castle or the other forts, and those of the ships were screened. The tropical night seemed to him blacker than those of the North, and he was obliged to rely on his hearing rather than his sight to warn him of any approaching danger. He felt his responsibility to the uttermost — the knowledge that the lives of so many men depended upon his vigilance.

On his way South he had wondered how he would meet the new demands upon him, whether his old enemy, lack of courage, would find him out once again, and if it might possibly disgrace him by some act of cowardice. He did not speak of this terrible fear of fear to Blake; he had outgrown such confidences now, and he kept his mind from dwelling upon it.

In fact, it had not proved an exactly pleasant sensation to have a shot from one of the forts on shore, on its way to the water beyond, where it did no damage, pass so close as to graze his nose — even a Spanish gunner might hit sometime. But this thought did not trouble him

particularly; he was too busy to think of possibilities when every moment had a duty that allowed of no postponement or neglect.

He had done his duty well and conscientiously, living up to the standard expected of him. Discipline, that had once galled him like a heavy bit, now seemed a very lifebelt, supporting him where, left to himself, he might so easily have sunk.

They were lying close inshore, with engines stopped for a few hours; and these lonely night watches after days of action were trying to Geff. Imagination was freer in the darkness, and to his fancy blockade runners seemed to be darting about on every side, a phantom fleet, which his reason, however, soon demolished. He thought of the Maine. Who knew, he asked himself, where other mines, such as wrought her destruction, might be hidden in the harbor, waiting for their unsuspecting prey?

Suddenly his ears, sharpened almost to the keenness of a wild beast's by the ever-present danger, caught a curious clicking sound, like

the ticking of a watch, though more intermittent, and there flashed through his mind the recollection that mines were sometimes set off by clockwork. The sound came from somewhere near the stern, and he hurried aft and peered away out over the rail into the dark water heaving in a moderate swell. He saw nothing, and even the sound was now no longer audible. But then it came again, closer and louder than before.

Leaning out over the stern, Geff caught a glimpse of metal where a stray gleam from a shaded port made a path of light upon the waves.

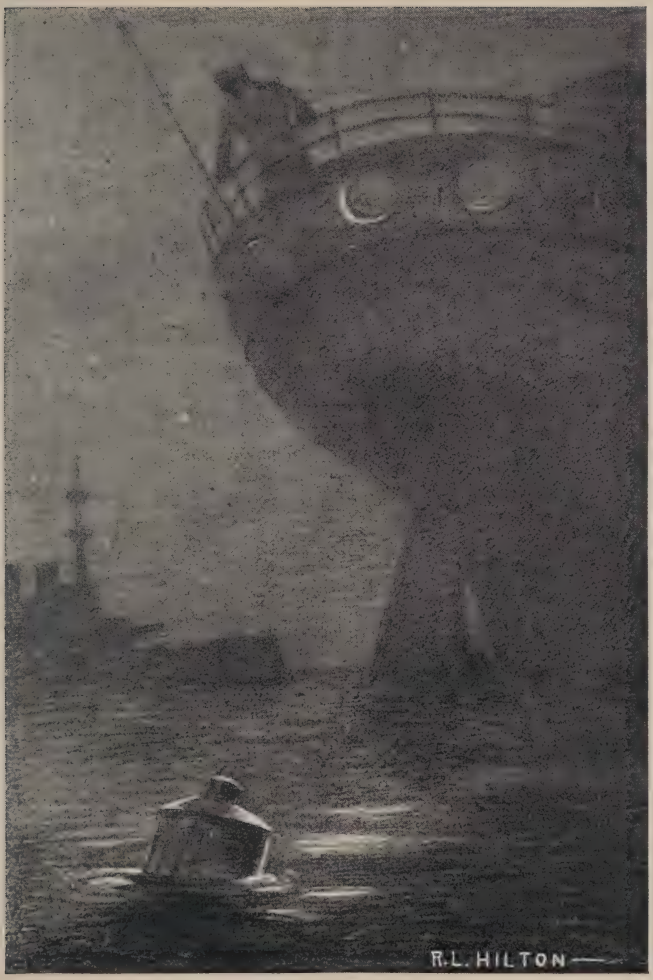
"A floating mine," he thought to himself while his heart beat quickly. How much longer had its clockwork to run; when would come the awful moment that the foe against which stout timbers and tempered steel availed nothing was upon him?

He started forward running, to arouse the officer of the deck; then he turned.

How it happened he was never able to ex-

plain — mind seemed to cease working while fingers grew busy; shoes, blouse, and trousers were stripped off and thrown to the deck — over the side he went; one splash into the darkness below — and then he was swimming, guided by the clicking sound. There was the thing below him, bumping against the rudder-post, a gleam white as the belly of a dead shark. He caught it with one hand, holding on to the rudder with the other, and wrenching it loose, swam with strokes as hurried and forceful as was possible with the one hand occupied, his only idea to remove it as far from the ship as he could.

Gradually, while he swam, his consciousness began to recognize something familiar in the shape of the thing he held and to realize its slight size. Treading water for an instant, he felt it over and made the discovery that it was an oil can. He shook it and heard some liquid splash against the sides — there was no clockwork — it was no mine, then, merely a can that had been cast overboard from some vessel,



GEFF CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF METAL

which the waves had thrown up against the ship's side; and it was the faint hitting of metal against metal with each movement of the ship that had caught his keen ear.

There was no mine. Geff swam more slowly back through the darkness to the dim black mass, and pulled himself up on deck by means of a rope he had half-unconsciously thrown over the stern. No one had seen his departure; but a sailor, sleeping in the stern, had awakened in time to witness his return and to wonder, but in silence, as the midshipman climbed over the rail and, slipping on his uniform over his dripping body, continued his watch.

There was no need to explain this exploit to any one, Geff thought, yet he knew that it was his real baptism of fire. The test had been none the less real though the danger had not existed; and he exulted in his heart. Something, a great burden, had fallen from him, and he felt himself at last a man. He had not faltered when he thought an emergency called to him; he had not proved a coward; fear had left him

forever now, he felt certain, that ignoble companion of so many years. It was not even reason that had led him to do what he had done, but instinct, so much quicker a guide. And if he had not hesitated then, if he had been equal to facing the most fearful of dangers, then he would always be so.

To none did Geff speak of that night's incident, except, years afterwards, to Blake. Not that he was afraid of ridicule, but because it had become to him as something sacred, like the vigil of a squire watching his armor on the eve of knighthood.

A week later he was transferred to the Gloucester, one of the transformed yachts the Navy had bought at the beginning of the war. And it was on her narrow deck that he played his minor part in the great battle.

After the Spanish battleships had made their tragic exit from Santiago Bay, at about four bells on that sunny morning of the third of July, two little torpedo-boat destroyers, the Furor and the Pluton, — pathetic rear guard

and remnant of Spain's gorgeous armadas in the Indies, — slipped out from the channel. No aid could be given to them by the battleships, themselves already overcome or fleeing; and the Indiana and the Gloucester rushed upon them like a mastiff and terrier on frightened water rats. The small rapid-fire guns of the converted yacht rained so hot a fire upon them that in twenty short minutes the Furor was beached and the Pluton had sunk in deep water.

Now the destroying enemy became a rescuing friend; American sailors and officers sprang overboard, careless of danger from exploding shells and the fire from the Socopa battery on shore, and worked as hard to save as they had to destroy.

No one of the rescuers was more eager and active than Geff. The launch which he commanded circled about the engulfing Pluton and he himself jumped overboard time and time again to haul on board the Spanish sailors clinging to bits of wreckage or endeavoring to

swim ashore while blood ran down eyes and mouth. From the decks of the Furor came cries of anguish; and Geff, bringing the launch as near as he dared, sprang again into the water and up on the blistering deck, lifting, hauling, and throwing the wounded to the sailors below. There were many others as willing and eager, and he might have been satisfied with commanding instead of taking active part, but such a thought did not once come to him. His shoes had holes burned in them; blood covered his uniform; it was likely that the boiler would explode, as one of his men pointed out to him, but he could not stop as long as there was one living man still to be helped.

So many had distinguished themselves that momentous day that deeds, which in days of peace would have made men's names famous, passed now almost unnoticed. But Geff had not acted from any desire of achieving notoriety, and consequently he was surprised and happy when Captain Wainwright, whom he so respected, said a few words of commendation;

and somehow, when he returned to the Academy, his classmates seemed to know all about his rescue work and were generous, if boyish, in their outspoken praise.

CHAPTER XV

RETURN TO THE ACADEMY

BLAKE did not begrudge Geff this reputation; indeed, he was genuinely pleased at the popularity his chum had won for himself. Their friendship now stood on a firmer basis than ever before: he respected Geff for all his efforts during the past three years, and admired him for his talents, so far beyond his own achievements. Yet there still clung to him a remnant of the old feeling of physical and moral superiority, an involuntary condescension to one whose weakness he had pardoned but could not completely comprehend. Perhaps Geff, whose intuitions were always keen, may occasionally have felt this; but if so, he never showed that he did, or was hurt at this assumption of superior virtue.

As the first class had been hurriedly graduated on its departure for war, the next class—

that of Blake, Geff, and Harry Ledyard — had now attained to the first position months earlier than usual. On their return to the Academy the now first-classmen found it difficult to get back into the old routine of ordinary uneventful drills and study of the theory of warfare, after having been engaged in real blockades and battles.

But it was pleasant to strut a little, in the attitude of seasoned veterans, before the admiring girls, between dances or while sitting with them on those seats reserved by custom to their illustrious rank, to relate "just a little thing that happened to me this summer which may interest you."

Blake in particular was always sure of an audience on the part of Lindsay. Indeed, though naturally reticent and modest, it is not a wonder if, after tasting the pleasure of her enthusiasm and eagerness for details, he should have magnified to a slight degree the importance of a certain midshipman's part in putting an end to Spanish dominion on the Western continent. He may also be pardoned if "he

worked this game for all it was worth," as Geff charged him with doing. Lindsay was growing prettier and more mistress of herself every day; and you may be sure that he was not the only one in his class who had made this discovery. So if by reciting again and again how he had felt when he caught sight of the fated ships steaming out of Santiago Harbor, what he had done, and incidentally what others had done, and how, according to his opinion, certain other evolutions might have produced other important results, he was able to keep Lindsay's attention fixed on himself, while less favored youths had to content themselves with eyes less bright and wit less keen — well, would he not have been guilty of arrant stupidity in remaining modestly silent?

It was Lindsay who had discovered Blake's ambition which he thought so carefully concealed in the depths of his innermost being. This was one day the year before, when they were taking a country walk together. As they were passing a negro shanty, five hungry

mongrel hounds rushed out at them, barking so fiercely that Lindsay, though a lover of dogs, had taken fright and started to run. Blake had no stick and the smooth white road of oyster-shell offered not even a pebble for a weapon.

"Down! Down with you! Go home!" he yelled, in a voice so loud and so fierce that the dogs slunk away, tails between legs, and a little negro boy came running through the startled hens to see what had happened.

"Why, Blake," exclaimed Lindsay, as they walked on, after laughing at her fright, "I did n't know that you had such a voice. I never heard one like it. It's what they call stentorian in books, the kind that would have been as useful to Joshua as his trumpets when he wanted to knock down Jericho's walls. You will never lack a job; you need only advertise as 'the human megaphone' and you will have steady employment."

"But is it clear?" inquired Blake, looking pleased instead of annoyed at her remark.

"Clear as a bell and loud as a bull; it's not

beautiful, Blake, but it can be mighty useful, as I can testify."

"Beautiful!" sneered Blake. "What under the sun does a man want with a *beautiful* voice? All I'm anxious to know is, will it carry as well as Scidmore's."

Scidmore was the Adjutant. Lindsay began to smile and her eyes to shine.

"If I tell you what I really think about it, will you answer me truthfully about something I want to know?" she asked.

"Guess so, — what?"

"Have you been practicing lately to see how loud you could shout?"

Blake's face turned crimson as if he had been caught in some crime.

"Have you, Blake? I'll never tell; have you?"

Blake nodded without speaking.

"That's why you have been going out sailing alone lately; is n't it?"

Blake nodded again.

"Then I know why. *You want to be Adjutant*

next year. Oh! Blake, I hope you will," she added, changing her mocking tone to one of sympathetic interest. "I do hope you'll get it. And yes, I do think your voice'll carry lots better than Scidmore's. Did n't you hear his break yesterday? And I am sure you have a good chance."

"You won't let on to your father, will you, Lin?" said Blake earnestly, always morbidly afraid that Mr. Sidney might imagine he was taking advantage of the family's friendliness to influence him in his official capacity. "I'd never forgive you if you did. I'd seem such a pretty fool."

"Of course not, but I'll be so proud if you do get it." And then they discussed the pros and cons of the situation.

And now, shortly after the return from Cuba, the various honors had been announced. Blake McIntosh was Adjutant, and only one or two who had hoped to bear that title themselves failed to see that no better choice could possibly have been made.

Blake himself was far more pleased than he ever confessed, even to Lindsay. He was without doubt one of those who are born to command; and to issue orders in his clear voice on the parade ground, to know he stood there for every spectator to see, as straight as the mast of a ship, that his every movement was executed with the precision of a machine — but that most wonderful of all machines, the human body guided by the human will — that was to him as satisfying as his appearance before the public is to the successful actor, as the sight of his ideas in print is to the writer. He may have been a little vain, a little puffed up with his authority; but if so, he was too sensible to let it be apparent; for midshipmen will not, more than other sensible youths, put up in a companion with any suspicion of "swelled head."

Geff, too, had found as great an outlet for his talents as Blake. He had been elected editor of "The Lucky Bag." Midshipmen, like students in other colleges, bring out each year

a volume filled with photographs, poems, drawings, and jokes relating to incidents connected with the Academy, chief emphasis being laid on the doings and sayings of the first class. Here, too, there could be no doubt that the best possible person had been picked out for editor. Geff was busy in all his spare time writing verses, and drawing illustrations for them. One evening Blake pulled out the portfolio in which they were kept and went over them, chuckling with amusement at the picture of Daisy and Pete and "Funchal" as they first met under the fair Dolores's window; of Harry, with a look as fierce as an executioner, hauling the frightened Pablo into the Superintendent's, while Blanca peered in at the window with a diabolic grin; and at the stanzas which celebrated their own imprisonment on the Santee after the working-clothes episode.

"But, Raff," he said, "you've got enough here to fill two 'Lucky Bags' by your lonesome, and the drawings are way over and above any ever done in the 'Bag' before. It don't

seem just fair to set a standard no other class can catch up to. You're 'most a professional, you know."

"You rate my stuff too high, Adjutant," said Geff, who was fond of the new appellation; "but I guess you are right in one way. It would look cheeky of me to put so much of it in. I didn't know I'd done such a lot. It was so much fun doing it. I'll see now that somebody else gets a chance, so here goes for all but three of them." And he started to tear them up.

"Hold on, you crazy creature!" cried Blake, jumping up just in time to save the papers from destruction; "don't you know some day you'd give money for them? They're too good to be lost, and when I'm an admiral and you a famous painter, writer, critic, or whatever you intend to be, we'll have a good laugh over them. Pack them away and take care of them."

His editorial work, collecting a joke from one classmate, a drawing from another, arranging for the securing and printing of the advertise-

ments, kept Geff very busy, yet did not put a stop to his outdoor life. His studies did not worry him very much; he was one of the brightest men in his class, would probably be a "star" even. He still had, however, to overcome the suspicion and dislike of some of his instructors, who, not having had their attention drawn to the change in his conduct, still considered him rebellious and undisciplined, in which opinion an occasional careless act on his part only confirmed them.

A caricature which he drew of one of the discipline officers who had incurred the hostility of the midshipmen, together with certain verses written underneath, detailing in picturesque language certain of his enormities, was far too good to be kept as the privileged enjoyment of a few, so they were passed about generally in the quarters and shown in confidence to some of Annapolis's girl population, were copied by one of them, and finally fell into the hands of some of the unfortunate's brother officers, who were much amused.

The daughter of this particular officer, Lieutenant-Commander Whitehall by name, just home from a French convent school, made her first appearance in Annapolis and society. Geff, introduced to her at an afternoon tea, did not catch her name. She was so pretty, so earnest in her manner, that he found her charming.

"I have wanted to know you, Mr. Summers," she said to him, speaking with a slight accent which to Geff set her apart from the home-grown variety of "femmes"; "I can't believe you can be so cruel as you really are."

"What do you refer to, Miss — Miss — ?"

"Whitehall," she answered significantly.

And then he understood, and was covered with confusion, which kept him even warmer than his close-fitting dress-jacket in the crowded room.

"Do you know that my papa is very, very sensitive, and that you have hurt him exceedingly?" she continued. "I have n't seen your drawing and verses, but I have heard of them,

so horribly clever. Do you think it is right," she questioned, looking up at him gravely, "just because you are clever, to make people laugh at a man who only does his duty?"

"Of course, it was n't right," Geff assented, and offered to perform any penance she might suggest as fitting, even to apologizing to her father. At this she shook her head. There was nothing to be done except to put an end to the circulation of the joke as far as possible.

But Geff did undergo his punishment every time he went to call on Cicely Whitehall; the appearance of her father on the scene left him as bereft of a subject of conversation as the veriest plebe. And when Cicely, still unacquainted with Academy regulations, in compliance with Geff's request to take a walk some time over Long Bridge, appointed an hour the next afternoon when no midshipman was allowed outside the gates, Geff did not enlighten her, and accepted gratefully. It was, indeed, poetic justice that Mr. Whitehall should be the one to apportion Mr. Summers a goodly

number of demerits on his return and a lecture on discipline which he was human enough to enjoy bestowing. This time the laugh was on Geff, and his classmates lost no opportunity of giving vent to it.

CHAPTER XVI

ROCKS AHEAD

LIFE was at spring tide for Blake now, and there were no shoals in sight. But as the months went on and the tide ebbed, a few dark peaks began to be apparent, though in a part of the channel still far ahead.

One of these menaces to navigation on Blake's course was Lindsay's refusal to become engaged to him, together with the increased attention of a young lieutenant, one of the new instructors. Lindsay, it must be acknowledged, was, if not a flirt, at least a tease, and finding that it annoyed Blake if she danced or talked often with Lieutenant Silverton, she could not resist worrying him in this way.

"You have absolutely no right to get angry, Blake," she declared one evening at the hop when her partner had remonstrated with her for giving to Silverton the dance he had

thought belonged to himself; "you have no right to imagine that you have any claim other than that of an old friend."

"Lindsay, Lindsay," he cried disconsolately, "how can you say that when you know —won't you promise? You say you want to see me graduate well; just think, then, how much easier your promise would make my mind and how much better I could study, if I knew all was settled and that we 'd be married when I get my ensign's commission. Please, Lindsay."

"No, old boy, I won't promise," said Lindsay, shaking her head, though she tried not to look at the pleading hazel eyes before her. "You have n't even won your spurs yet — or epaulettes, rather, and I'm not at all sure either that you'd make the kind of husband I want, if I ever want one at all."

"Is Lieutenant Silverton your ideal of one?" asked Blake jealously. "He does n't seem to me to be much to boast of as a man anyway."

"He was a 'star,' which is more than you'll

ever be," answered the girl, in an angrier tone than was her custom.

"That's true," he admitted sadly; "but I did n't know you thought so much of 'stars.' If that's the way things stand, I surely am out of the running."

Lindsay, seeing that he was really hurt, spoke more kindly: —

"There is n't any 'running' for anybody, Blake, and I don't think it necessary for everybody to be 'stars.' Anybody who graduates here, even at the bottom of the class, is no stupid. But what's this I hear of your 'hitting the tree' this month? It's too bad of you to be falling behind so in your last year."

"I'm sorry, too, but the truth is, Lindsay, that I've found it hard to get back to study after the summer. I'll begin to work again and 'bone' hard after Christmas and catch up long before June."

"Can you keep mum if I tell you a secret, Blake?" she asked, looking very important.

"Of course, what is it?"

"You won't have the chance of catching up by June."

"What do you mean, Lin?" he asked anxiously.

"Because the class is to be graduated in January," she whispered.

"In January! Why! Such a thing never happened before."

"Well, it's going to happen now. It's a secret for a few days still; then everybody'll know it. There are n't enough officers now for the ships on the different stations, here and in the Philippines, so they decided at the Department the other day that it would help a little to get a few more of you four or five months ahead of the usual time."

"The Lord be praised!" ejaculated Blake, so excitedly that Harry Ledyard dancing by longed to stop and find out the cause of his emotion.

"But you're not graduated yet, Blake," and Lindsay looked at him gravely; "and if graduation comes earlier, so do the examinations,

and there are all those months lacking in which you were counting on catching up."

Her words and look sobered Blake.

"That's so," he admitted sadly. "I had n't meant to fall behind so, but I guess I've been thinking too much about drills and evolutions instead of books. You've frightened me, Lin, and now you've got to console me."

The sentimental tone of a few moments ago had quite vanished. There was no thought now of marriage; and the man he believed himself to be had already given place to the boy afraid of the consequences of lessons unprepared, who was appealing for sympathy and advice. And his old comrade did not fail him. She made him tell her all the monthly marks he had received since his return and the number of times he had been "unsat"; then she reckoned up an average on her ball card which made her shake her head.

"It's bad enough, but it might be worse," she admitted. "Of course your efficiency in other things will bring up your average, but

you've got to give up everything else and 'bone' for the rest of the time. No hops."

"O Lin!"

"No, not one; no pistol practice, no football, no boating, nothing but bone, bone, bone."

"And then do you think I'll get through all right?"

"Certainly," she said emphatically; "but you've got so much to do that you'd better begin at once and not lose a minute. Come, take me home and then to your books, little boy."

There was no other person in the Academy who would have dared address the impressive Adjutant in this manner.

It was hard for Blake to keep the tremendous secret from Geff and to invent an excuse for his astonishing change of habits. It was, however, less than a week before it was a secret no longer, and the excitement was then only slightly less than that which had prevailed when the class had been ordered to Cuba. There was so much to be done: the new uniforms to be ordered, as well as civilian clothes;

invitations to be sent out for the graduation ceremonies, though these would not bear comparison with those of the usual "June Week"; applications to be made for assignments to certain stations and ships, which might or might not be considered.

And the girls, too, were busy getting new gowns for the First-Class German and the Graduation Hop, accepting partners for these two most important festivities of a midshipman's social career, and wondering whether they would ever like the men of the next class as well, and what chance they stood of being as popular with them.

Lindsay had even more momentous things to decide. Blake had not bothered her again with his question, but Lieutenant Silverton, really a fine sort of fellow, though Blake's jealousy would not permit of his perceiving and acknowledging it, was evidently on the point of asking a similar one, and she sometimes wondered if, when he did, she would not say yes. But his calls, and her numerous en-

gagements with him did not prevent her from taking a great interest in all that affected the first-classmen. After all, it was *her class*, she said; it was with its members that she had been most identified and among whom she had the most friends.

Blake came over occasionally for rest and encouragement, but she did not allow him to stay long. He had fallen once more into the slough of despondency, and this narrowing of his interest and thoughts made him seem boyish and unfinished in contrast to the confident, clever man of the world that Lieutenant Silverton was.

The remembrance of the coming examinations spoiled the Christmas hop to which, in spite of Lindsay's decree, he insisted upon going. Who could study at such a time? One of his instructors, out of mistaken kindness, meeting him in the dressing-room where Blake was putting on a fresh collar, spoke to him of the low marks he had been getting lately in the section room and suggested: —

"A little more study, Mr McIntosh, a little more study, remember."

Blake looked savagely around at the faces of his light-hearted comrades as he went in search of his partner for the next dance, and even tried to quarrel with Geff when they returned to their room because the latter joked about his black looks.

He had not got over his bad humor the next morning, which was Sunday, though he forgot it for a few moments during the singing of the anthem when Geff's voice rose above those of the rest of the choir.

"Why," he said to Geff as they walked together to an officer's quarters to which they had been invited to a noon dinner, — "why could n't that chump of a sky-pilot (their own popular chaplain having given up his pulpit that day to a stranger) have stuck to things he knows about, instead of trying to express himself in what he imagined was nautical language. Think of his saying, 'Remember, though your sails are full and the wind is waft-

ing you ahead, that an ambush may be lying in wait for you beyond, and a secret sin or weakness may creep up from the cockpit below and scuttle the brave ship.' What kind of an ambush can one have at sea? And the rest of it was all the same sort of bosh."

"It was rather remarkable for a mixture of metaphors," assented Geff, "and I don't see why clergymen so often think we must be kept amused with toy boats. All the same, there was a grain of sense in what he said."

"About secret sins?" asked Blake ironically. "What particular pirate are you afraid will poke his head up your hatches?"

"Well, I don't know just which at present; it was only that he made me realize how you've got to keep your eye peeled for them all the time."

"I don't believe in having dark holes on board where they can hide," said Blake emphatically, — "where there's any room for underhand vices. I'm ashamed of my temper often enough and of my grouches, but at least

they're aboveboard. I'll try to get the better of them some day, but I don't worry about the other kind. We're neither of us likely to turn pickpockets or murderers if we have n't shown any disposition in that line up to now."

Geff saw clearly several points he might make in a debate, but let the matter drop, as they were almost at their destination, and also because he knew that Blake was never to be convinced by argument.

CHAPTER XVII

TEMPTATION

BROODING over the one idea had affected Blake's nerves and made him so cross, impatient, and generally on edge, that Geff found it better to avoid the slightest controversy, and did not even venture a joke.

Blake did n't want to talk things over with any one; he could n't stand Geff's unusual gentleness and the looks in which he thought he read pity already for a blighted career. The final examinations were taking place and in his abnormal condition he failed to do himself justice. Knowing that he had made a low mark one day depressed him so that he did even worse the second, and still worse the third. He was almost desperate at the thought of failure now that he was within sight of the goal.

He found it impossible to study for the examination of the following day, that in navigation, the most difficult of all — how could he

fix his mind on it? He wandered out into town, but was soon back again, strolling aimlessly about the grounds where friends kept stopping to talk with him, and he felt sure he would do or say something to regret if he did n't soon get off by himself.

To escape their questions he ran up the Sidneys' steps, though he knew and was glad that Lindsay was out. She was, indeed, the last person in the whole world he wanted to meet that moment. If he failed the next day she would never marry him, and it was not possible to discuss calmly such a possibility with her. He asked for Mrs. Sidney, believing her, too, to be in town, and when the maid confirmed this and asked him to "rest his hat" and wait for Miss Lindsay, he was glad that he had achieved his purpose.

It was, however, a refuge for a few moments only; Lindsay or her mother might be in any minute, and he preferred to return even to his own room and face Geff's pity rather than talk to one of them.

He sat in the drawing-room looking across the hall to Sidney's study, where the desk was covered with piles of papers and books arranged in the shipshape order in which that officer always kept his things.

Those who had seen Blake McIntosh nowhere but as Adjutant on the parade ground or victorious on the football field would not have recognized him now as, with head bent, eyes dulled, and mouth open, he sat staring before him. Even his old friend, the gray-and-red parrot, in the hall, who always whistled and talked to him, must have doubted his identity, for he kept silent, his head cocked on one side, looking curiously at the bowed figure.

The steam heat, though it was January, had made the house uncomfortably warm and Mrs. Sidney had left a window open in the study. A sudden gust of wind from the bay found its way through it, blowing the neatly arranged papers from the desk on to the floor, even out into the hall.

An instinct for orderliness and the remem-

brance of how Lindsay's father disliked to have his things upset, roused Blake from his unhappy meditation sufficiently to make him rise slowly and pick them up one by one. Without the slightest curiosity as to their contents, he could not help seeing that here was a list of questions of some sort. For some examination, of course; he had completely forgotten that Mr. Sidney was the officer who prepared the list for the coming navigation examination.

He stooped to reach some sheets which had blown under a chair when something other than the steam heat or the stooping position brought the blood to his face. Like a flash of lightning it had come to him — if he could only see what was written on these papers *he need not fail tomorrow*, need not lose his career and Lindsay!

He turned the papers over as quickly as if they burned his fingers, so that the words and figures were hidden from him; then he stood still with them in his hand, trembling all over.

The blood still beat against his brain so that he heard it throb; his eyes that had been so

blurred now brightened; his fingers shook, but — they turned the papers again while he read.

He had not heard steps entering the house nor, since his back was turned, had he seen Geff, who, with the freedom of a frequent visitor, had come in without ringing. Geff stood spellbound, fearful lest Blake should discover him. Then he turned and fled, closing the door quietly.

A few doors off he met Lindsay, who had seen him coming from the house. He refused her invitation to go back with him and he kept her talking while they walked in the opposite direction till he felt certain Blake must have gone.

When Mr. Sidney went to his desk after dinner he knew at once that his papers had been handled. He was a man whose excess of caution made him appear suspicious of others' honesty. He had grown into the habit of keeping things locked that had no possible interest for any one else, of making secrets where there

was not the slightest necessity for them. He had intended to lock up the papers before going out, but an unexpected message from the Superintendent had called him off before he had time to do so.

"Lindsay," he called out, "did you touch my papers while I was away?"

"No, dad," she answered, coming to the door, "why should I care to see them? I don't have to answer them to-morrow."

"Don't joke about such matters," he said as he counted over the sheets. "One page is gone; can you find it anywhere?"

They both searched, but in vain. It had blown completely under the desk where it lay hidden from their eyes, as it had been hidden from Blake's.

"Has anybody been here this afternoon?" he asked, after a moment's thought.

"What do you mean, dad? what are you imagining?" asked Lindsay, glancing up quickly at him.

"You see for yourself," he replied, frowning,

"that a page of examination questions has disappeared. Has any one been here, I ask?"

"Geoffrey came to see me while I was out, and Maria says Blake was here, too, earlier."

"Did they come in?"

"I believe so; I don't know. Oh, dad, you don't imagine — you can't believe — "

"Not Blake, of course," Mr. Sidney said hastily. "If either of them could be guilty of such an action it would be the other."

"He would n't either," exclaimed Lindsay emphatically.

Yet with the mystery unsolved, the suggestion once made came back to her again and again, and she remembered her old dislike of Geoffrey and Blake's quarrel with him, the ground of which he had never fully explained. Of course — if the paper had been taken — but it could n't have been by either of them — but, if it had — why, then, naturally it would be Geff.

On his return to their room, which he put off as long as possible, Geff avoided meeting

Blake's glance. He felt that he did not see aright; he even doubted that his eyes could have witnessed correctly at the Sidneys'. It was utterly impossible — Blake, the soul of honor, Blake, whose ideals were so high! — Blake do a deed himself that he would not tolerate in another, a deed which rendered those guilty of it unworthy of his regard! There was, of course, some explanation of what he had seen, some plausible excuse. Yet why, then, could he not ask for it?

Study period came and neither had spoken. Each turned red when the other lifted his head from his books as if to break the long silence of which Blake at least was unaware. Geff's eyes took in no word on the page before him; they were fixed upon his friend with a doglike, ununderstanding expression. Blake kept turning from one page to certain paragraphs on other pages, never hesitating, working feverishly at such a white heat of effort that the mental processes were almost visible.

Still Geff sat there, his head now bent over

on his hands, his elbows on the table. There was no longer any need to look—he had seen already what he could never forget.

Presently he left the room, and somehow, by means known to an upper-classman, the building, without being seen by the officer of the day. It was a dark night when he found himself apparently all alone in the grounds, and he sat down on the Tripoli Monument, fairly safe from detection.

What was to be done? — he asked himself earnestly. Never in his life had he felt such a necessity for some immediate action. He could not warn Blake; he could not speak aloud the word which would burn his lips. Moreover, it was certain — absolutely certain — that Blake would come to his senses before the next day. Of course, that would be so; Blake was the soul of honor. But even then what would happen? He had already studied up certain portions of the book on which they would be examined. How was it possible that this could be undone? If Blake did not make use of the

knowledge thus gained his paper would be blank, and that would mean failure or an explanation that was even worse.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed aloud. "What *shall* I do?"

For half an hour or more he sat there thinking, until he was numbed with the cold, for he had not put on his overcoat. Then he rose and walked slowly towards the officers' quarters in Blake Row.

Like a man going to execution he mounted the steps and rang the bell.

Mr. Sidney answered it himself.

"What does this mean, Mr. Summers?" he questioned sharply; "why are you out of quarters at this hour?"

"Something unusual, sir," replied Geff; "will you let me speak to you alone for a few minutes?"

He was afraid any moment that Lindsay might appear and require an explanation, and he did not breathe freely until they were in Mr. Sidney's study with the door closed.

"Well, Mr. Summers," asked the officer, "what is it you wish?"

It was a minute before Geff was able to speak. He stood, refusing the chair to which he had been motioned. He felt that if he once sat down he could never get to his legs again.

"I came to see Miss Lindsay this afternoon," he began, "but she was out."

He talked rapidly, but as if he had learned by heart the words he was saying.

"Yes," assented the officer in a colorless tone.

"The wind had blown some papers from your desk to the floor, papers with examination questions on them. — I have come, sir, to beg you to substitute other questions for them."

"You mean," asked the officer, "you mean — ?"

Then a feeling of pity in spite of his disgust prevented his finishing the sentence. He remembered how this youth had changed in so many ways for the better; how, once the most insubordinate of midshipmen, he had made

himself a frictionless wheel in the Academy's machinery. He realized that there had been nothing to force this confession from him but conscience.

"You will, of course, act as you think proper in regard to this conversation, sir," said Geff; "but you will use other questions, will you not?"

"The questions were those of last year's examination; they are never the same two years in succession. I had them out to compare them; those for to-morrow have been locked in my desk all the time."

Geff scarcely took in the significance of this, but stood there waiting for sentence. At last, after some minutes of meditation, the officer looked up.

"Mr. Summers, will you assure me that nothing of this sort has happened in any of your other papers for the examination?"

"I give you my word, sir."

"And if I refrain from mentioning anything that has — taken place in this room — you will

give me your word that as long as you are in the Service you will so act that I shall never have cause to regret my clemency?"

"I give you my word, sir," replied Geff in a low but firm voice.

"Then, good-night, Mr. Summers," said the officer, opening the door and showing him out through the hall to the front steps; but Geff noticed bitterly that he did not shake hands.

"What did Geoffrey want with you, dad?" called Lindsay, running downstairs. "I heard your voices. Was it about this afternoon? was it all right or" — seeing the grave expression on her father's face — "did he really confess he had taken your paper?"

"Go to bed, little girl," said her father, kissing her; "we had some business together. Go to bed."

"Oh, dad," she exclaimed, half crying as she went slowly up step by step, "what a terrible, horrible place this world is!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PIRATE BELOW DECKS

If Geff had not known that Blake was temperate by inheritance, habit, and necessity, he would have thought he had been drinking, so dazed did he seem the next morning. There was no conversation between the two, but Blake's movements in dressing and putting the room in order were erratic; he took up an article, threw it aside, picked it up again hurriedly, then sat down in a fit of abstraction as if he had the whole day before him, the result being that for the first time in months he was late at formation.

It was with an inward ejaculation of thankfulness that Geff set himself to answer the questions on the paper when a little later they had marched into the section room. Even if Blake had not come to his senses in time, as he was sure he must have done, there was no need to

worry, since the questions had never been seen by him. Even the knowledge of what Mr. Sidney thought of him was not sufficient to counterbalance the feeling of relief that Blake's honor would remain untarnished.

He noticed that Blake was writing quickly, easily, though his face was still flushed and he looked feverish. He was evidently better prepared than either of them had imagined. Their papers were finished at about the same time and both sat waiting for their less speedy classmates.

Blake stared before him with unseeing eyes, and Geff began to be worried at the continuance of his unusual attitude and manner. He saw him suddenly begin to twitch and tremble; then he sprang to his feet, crying out in a voice which made the instructor and his companions start:

"I beg, sir, to report that I have been 'gouging.'"

"Cheating! You, Mr. McIntosh!" exclaimed the officer in amazement, while every pen in the room stopped simultaneously.

Geff jumped up, saying: "Mr. Murchison,

Mr. McIntosh does not know what he is saying. He is not well; he has been overworking. With your permission, sir, I will take him to his room. He is not himself at all."

"I am sure that is so," replied the instructor, thankful for the explanation. "Mr. McIntosh, you will report yourself on the sick-list to the officer of the day."

"I am not sick, sir," cried Blake angrily; "I am a cheat and I want you all to know it. I saw the papers at Mr. Sidney's last evening and I 'boned' up all the answers."

His eyes flashed and his cheeks were red with excitement; then the red and the flash died away, giving place to a ghastly pallor, and his head drooped forward as if, now that honest pride had left him, there was nothing to hold it erect.

"That is absolutely impossible, sir," explained Geff, his own voice trembling. "Mr. Sidney told me only yesterday that he kept his examination papers under lock and key. He is mistaken. He could not have got at them.

You can see for yourself, Mr. Murchison, that he is in an abnormal condition and not accountable for what he says."

Blake, unable to comprehend, gave Geff a questioning glance.

"Then what papers were those I *did* see?" he asked, unmindful of section-room discipline or of how strange it was that Geff should know what had happened.

"Last year's list," replied his friend in a low tone; "you have not had a single question today that you read yesterday. If you were n't so upset you'd have known that."

Blake had sunk down into his seat again, vainly endeavoring to understand the situation. His classmates, actuated by kindness, made a pretense of going on with their writing, but were far too excited and curious to do more than read over and over again the words that had lost all meaning for them.

Blake got up again, but this time slowly, with the effort of an old man, and his voice was now quiet and very sad.

"Sir," he said, "though it seems that technically I have not cheated, I really did in intention. I — I — don't know how I could have done what I did. I must have gone out of my mind — but when I saw those papers at Mr. Sidney's and thought them the questions for to-day's exams, I read them and made notes. I don't understand how I did it — I can't explain, but that's no excuse."

The words grew lower and lower, but not one was missed by any one in the room. Nobody spoke; there was nothing for any one to say. Even the instructor felt at a loss to know where his duty lay.

At last Blake himself broke the trying silence: —

"With your permission, sir, I'll go and report to the Superintendent."

Geff grabbed him by the arm as he neared the door and held him.

"Mr. Murchison," he cried, "don't let him ruin his career in that way. I can testify that he has not been himself this past fortnight. He

had a moment's weakness — have n't we all of us sometimes? — but he has paid for that by acknowledging it to us. He cannot be considered guilty of cheating, for he never saw to-day's papers. I put it to you, sir, and to his classmates," he added, turning towards them, his hand still on Blake's shoulder, "is it right or necessary for him to go to the Superintendent? He would take the same view of it, I know; but why need the matter go beyond this room? We all know Blake McIntosh."

The officer weighed the matter in silence a moment; then he said: —

"I leave it to his own classmates to decide. Gentlemen, shall Mr. McIntosh report to the Superintendent or not?"

No one in that section room had ever heard of or imagined such an interruption to routine, and the midshipmen scarcely knew in what way they ought to express their opinion. One of them, however, called out, "No, sir." Then the others, quickly accustoming themselves to

the freer atmosphere, exclaimed emphatically, "No, of course not. McIntosh's all right." And one, slapping Blake on the shoulder, "We don't stand for gouging, but we know you're no gouger, Mac. Nobody'll ever learn from any of us what's happened here to-day."

No one in the world but his old mammy could claim to have seen Blake shed a tear; but now — well, he had to put his head on his arms and keep it there a few minutes.

When the class was dismissed, its members stopped to give Blake a word or a tap — an eloquent testimony to the position he had won in their esteem, one that even his own confession could not destroy.

Once again in their own room, Blake turned to Geff.

"I can't wait a minute longer, Raff, to beg your pardon for the way I've secretly looked down on you, imagining like an ass that I could never do what you did, though, Lord knows, I've done ten times worse, because I was so high and mighty sure of myself. I loathe

myself, Geff, and I've simply got to go to the 'Sup's' and confess, so as not to sail under false colors any longer."

"You shall not," said Geff, gritting his teeth as he planted himself before the door. "You've done all that is necessary; you've nothing to report. Imagine what your father and Lindsay would think if they heard an exaggerated and false account of it."

"Dad and Lindsay!" cried out Blake, as if struck. "Good Lord! And they have got to know!"

"No, no; there is no need."

"There is, I tell you. Let me out, Raff; I can't rest till I get it over. Dad's at the Sidneys' now; he was to arrive this morning."

But Geff would not move from the door and Blake was in no mood to use force against him.

"Will you promise not to go to the 'Sup's' if I let you out?" asked Geff as they stood facing each other.

"Yes," agreed Blake; "that is, provided Dad and Lindsay think it right not to. They've got to decide."

"You're a fool, but go on, then."

The three Sidneys and Captain McIntosh were chatting together when Blake entered the room. They had only to look at him to see that something was wrong. The two persons Blake loved best on earth were there, and in a moment they would know how misplaced their belief in his honor had been. He felt that he must turn and run rather than face them. If some one else even could tell them. Yet he began to speak at once so as to cut off the possibility of retreat.

At first they thought there was some joke, but the boy's gravity soon undeceived them. Captain McIntosh's brow knitted and Lindsay clenched her hands.

"But I don't understand," said Mr. Sidney as Blake finished. "I knew some one had tampered with my papers, and yesterday evening Mr. Summers came to see me and led me to

infer that he had been the one and asked me to substitute other questions for them."

"Did he!" exclaimed Blake in astonishment; "he must have guessed somehow what I'd done and was trying to shield me."

The Sidneys started to leave the room, but were stopped by Captain McIntosh.

"Please stay; we must see this through. Blake, I cannot deny how this has hurt me, that you, my son, should be morally, if not technically, guilty of cheating. But," he added, more slowly, as if the process of thinking on new lines were difficult for him, "it seems to me that your classmates were right in believing there was no necessity for further publicity. I don't think it is because you are my son that I say this. I am trying to be impartial, but I believe that as you have done no harm to any one but yourself — and me — there is no further reparation necessary, no other punishment than what you are already suffering. Still," and here he turned to Mr. Sidney, "I want your opinion, Dick; it will be unbiased."

"I agree with you absolutely, Bruce."

It was with a great pang that Blake saw that Lindsay had slipped out of the room without one glance at him. Truly, his father was right — what punishment could exceed that which he was now undergoing? Whether he would graduate was still a matter of doubt, but there was one thing of which he was certain: all thought of marriage with Lindsay was at an end.

"Get permission to dine with me at the hotel this evening, Blake," said his father, and then mercifully released him.

Blake hurried back to his room, anxious not to lose a minute in telling Geff what he thought of such friendship as his, but Harry Ledyard and some others of their particular gang were there, laughing and joking and advising Geff not to bother to take a bath the next morning, since he was to be thrown into the bay — the customary retribution every editor of "The Lucky Bag" receives for the jokes he publishes on his fellow midshipmen.

Blake wished them all in Guinea; yet it was a relief to breathe again for a moment the old, jolly, care-free atmosphere. They talked of the Firstclass German next evening, of the Graduation Hop, of rumors of engagements to be announced, of the possibility of the President's giving out the commissions; and Blake, though he answered only when questioned, managed to smile at some of the fun.

At last they were gone, and Blake blurted out: —

"Raff, you know what I think of you. What made you do such a damned splendid thing? How could you let Sidney believe you were the one?" He seized his friend's hand and wrung it eloquently. "I can't thank you, Raff; you should n't have done it for me, but the Sidneys know now what a blessed old idiot you are."

The unusual amount of emotion he had experienced that day made him feel as if he had been pounded. Geff, too, generally so talkative, could not find the right words and so stood silently by Blake's side, both looking out

into the darkness, their own light still not turned on. But the nearness of his friend seem to comfort Blake.

"Tell me, Raff," he asked, his voice very unsteady, "how did you manage to live when — we were all such beasts to you? I don't see how I can — how I can even dine with my father to-night. Did you hate yourself as I do myself, Raff?"

"Yes, I did. The only way to get back again is to keep your mind on what you will be, not what you were, Blake. Great Lord! I'm no one to preach, but I know that's the only way you'll come through this. Of course, many men would think you were making a mountain out of a molehill, that you had n't done much; but you can't think that way, nor can I any longer. I've grown to feel different. But because you hit against a rock, on account of careless steering, and knocked a dent in your hull, is no reason to run your boat ashore. There's fair water ahead. You'll be on the lookout now, too, for uncharted shoals. Come," he

added, "get into your dress-jacket and be off. Your father 'll be over the worst now; he 'll help you right yourself."

"Yes, dad 'll do that," assented Blake; "and there 'll never be another blow like this for him. But, Raff, Lindsay turned her back on me and left the room without a word. That 's all over now."

"The devil she did!" exclaimed Geff; and for this he could find no comfort to offer.

CHAPTER XIX

GRADUATION

THE uncertainty was now over. The result of the examinations was known and there were no tears to be shed. Not one member of the first class had "bilged."

Now that departure was at hand the Academy and its life seemed very dear to those who were about to leave it. Even the absorbing discussions of future plans and the surmises as to each other's destinations would sometimes be interrupted by reminiscences of ancient days in the dim distance of plebedom; and opinions were freely expressed that the battalion would go to the dogs immediately when the present Adjutant and the other officers were no longer there to guide it.

Harry Ledyard recalled them to the present when he rushed excitedly into Blake's and Geff's room, where a number of their classmates were assembled, and called out: —

"I've got *two* partners for the hop. Who's short a 'femme'? An aunt from St. Louis I never saw before has just arrived with her daughter and — 'Oh, of course, Cousin Harry will take you to the dance, Annie' — and Cousin Harry already has his hands full with Miss Peggie coming down from Baltimore. Who wants the chance of earning a life-saving medal by saving my life? If I don't get rid of one of them, me for a briny grave."

Luckily such a fate was not in store for him, and Cousin Annie was provided for.

But Harry's dilemma recalled to Blake the fact that he had not yet released Lindsay from her promise to go to the hop with him. He had neither seen nor heard from her since his confession. He realized only too well what her attitude towards cheating was, what a high standard she set up for all midshipmen to follow, and how he was the last one she had ever expected to fall below it. He had no feeling of resentment at her silence, only he could not see her again; it would be too painful. He wrote

her a formal note, saying that, as he would not be able to attend the Graduation Hop, he must ask her to excuse him from escorting her.

The answer did not come until the next day. Evidently it had been hard for her to write. There were only three lines, telling him to meet her that afternoon at the sea-wall by Fort Severn. Blake, though he thought of many excuses, could find none that seemed sufficiently courteous, and saw no way to escape the interview.

During the past few days there had been drills of all kinds for the Board of Visitors, though some of the usual "June Week" ceremonies had been curtailed owing to the different season. Blake as Adjutant had been the delight of feminine eyes even more than the Three-Striper himself; and the knowledge that his father was watching him critically made him do his very best in every way. At least he would not fail his father in such matters. And his voice rang out clear as a trumpet, and his walk

and bearing were as military as it was possible to be.

Geff had found himself a "star" and his drawings in the "Lucky Bag" were admired and talked about by officers, midshipmen, and girls. Mr. Sidney had sent for him to express the belief that the Navy would be fortunate in the services of an officer who had proved himself so loyal a friend. He was complimented on all sides on his standing; but best of all was the popularity he had won with his classmates — a more popular man would not graduate that year. He was busily examining their new civilian clothes which had just arrived when Blake left him to meet Lindsay.

He was the first at the meeting-place by the side of the old fort. As the month was January and not June, there was no one else who had preëmpted the favorite spot. Soon he saw Lindsay coming towards him. He looked at her as if he had not seen her for a long time. Whether he beheld her now with new eyes or not, he suddenly realized that she was, indeed,

grown up. Probably she would soon be marrying that sneak of a Silverton, he thought. He wondered if her husband would love her as he should have done. As he saw her lift her hand (gloved in the white woolen midshipman gloves that the Academy girls wear), to hold on her wind-blown hat, he wished that he might have felt its firm warm grasp once more, though he were never to put the ring on her finger. But even that was to be denied him now. Lindsay could never pretend when there was a real issue at stake.

She was walking slowly, he noticed, she who never could bear to dawdle along. It hurt her kind heart, he thought, to be obliged to show any change in her treatment of him.

And slowly he, too, moved towards her. She put out her hand, but drew it back when she found he made no motion to take it, refusing to benefit by what he believed an involuntary movement on her part.

"Well, Blake," she said, breaking the

awkward silence, "this is our last walk together on this old sea-wall."

"Yes," he replied curtly, noticing as he had often before how well their steps matched each other's.

"Are n't you a little sorry?" But Lindsay got no answer.

"Of course, you're not going to leave me without a partner for the hop," she added, in a tone that sought to be as easy and light as possible. "Where could I find one at this late hour if you left me in the lurch? I suppose I might let it be known that Lindsay Sidney was doomed to sit at home and some one might take pity on me; but you see such a thing has never happened to me before, and I'd really be ashamed to acknowledge that I stood in need of an escort. You'll certainly not force me to that, Blake?"

Blake's heart was sore within him to think that Lindsay should care more about missing a hop than about the state of his feelings.

"You talk of being ashamed," he cried. "You

don't know the meaning of the word! I can't understand you, Lindsay. You are horrified at what I've done — as you ought to be; why are n't you ashamed, then, to ask me to go to a hop with you as if nothing had happened? You ought to be, I tell you."

For answer Lindsay leaned her head against the walls of the old fort and burst into tears. Blake had never seen her cry like this and he could not stand it.

"Lindsay, Lin darling," he said, stroking her hand, "don't cry. Forgive me for being so cross. I did n't mean to hurt you any more. Oh! if I could only wake up and find this past week a dream."

"Well, what then, Blake?" she asked, her head still turned from him.

"I'd graduate fairly or I'd fail, but I'd make you marry me in either case."

"You can do both still, dear boy," she whispered, facing round.

"Lindsay! Are you in earnest? Don't you despise me?"

"Yes, old Blake, I 'm in earnest," and her shining eyes told him more even than her words.

"But how can you change in a minute?" he questioned, still unable to believe in his happiness.

"It is n't a minute; it 's been coming on ever since the day when I ran out of the room. Even then I wanted to cry on your shoulder and tell you how brave I thought you were to come and confess to us all. Not that I was n't sorry," she added truthfully, as she pressed his hand; "you know well enough without my telling what I want you to be. But, Blake dear, I was sure that there would never be a *second time.* I know you too well. It was only when I saw you in such trouble that I found out I loved you, but then I had to make sure if I loved you enough. That 's why I seemed so cruel in not sending you a message. I could n't write without giving myself away, and I could n't propose to you myself when you might have changed your mind."

"Lin! You know that was n't possible."

HER SHINING EYES TOLD MORE THAN HER WORDS

"But I took the first chance you gave me," she added, "and then I could n't stand it when you thought me a frivolous, heartless creature just because I had to talk nonsense to keep you from seeing the truth."

"But Silverton, Lindsay?"

"He asked me *that night*" (Blake knew the night she meant), "and I told him 'no.'"

"And suppose I had 'bilged'?"

"I'd have had to marry you, all the same, I suppose, and we could have become — oyster diggers," she added, smiling as she looked out at the oyster boats, their long tongs swinging over the stern, dotted between them and Kent Island. "I could n't have had a land-lubber for a husband, you know I've always said."

More explanations would have followed, but Academy discipline takes no thought of lovers' needs. There was a drill, the last one at which Blake would be Adjutant, and he was obliged to hurry away after a single kiss.

The graduation services were over. In spite

of the anxiety of mothers and sisters that the pile of commissions, which the distinguished Admiral distributed one by one from the modest receptacle of a waste-paper basket, would give out before their own particular midshipmen were provided for, there *were* enough for all. Only a roll of parchment, but how much it stood for in the past, and how much more in the future!

Now the battalion had filed out from the Chapel, and the graduates were surrounded by relatives and friends, little groups that mingled and divided beneath the leafless trees of the walks.

Blake's aunt, as his only female relation present, felt the necessity of finding out just what that bright-faced young girl who clasped her nephew's hand so firmly was to him. But Lindsay spoiled her well-laid plans to ferret out the truth by kissing her and whispering the secret. Then the old lady joined the group of the Sidneys, Captain McIntosh and Mrs. Summers and Geff's uncle on

the Sidneys' steps, leaving the young people alone till they came in to dinner with them.

Blake and Lindsay and Geff and his cousin Millie strolled back and forth before the old Japanese bell that recalls the early friendship between that country and the American Navy.

"Don't you think I deserve the thanks of the Government, Mr. McIntosh, for having been the means of making Geff into so magnificent an officer? He used to write me that it was only his bet and my disbelief in his staying powers that kept him here."

"You do, indeed, Miss Patterson," replied Blake, smiling his brightest smile; "and I am delighted to extend my own personal thanks to you for having sent me a chum and — a best man."

"When is the wedding to be?" the interested girl questioned eagerly; "before I go back home, I hope."

"Not for two years," said Blake, a little

sadly; "not until we get back from the cruise."

Lindsay, feeling it her duty to play the part of hostess to Geff's cousin, pointed out to her all the objects and persons of interest, while the two young officers fell a little behind.

They were both ordered to the Philippines by the same transport, but once there, they would be on different ships and could scarcely expect to see much of each other. Their intimate life together had come to an end. Both were wondering how much the future would bring them together.

Geff said: "You can hardly wait for these two years to be over, can you, Blake?"

"Nor you either, Raff. There'll be lots of things to do and see out there in the East, but I suppose you are already thinking of that wonderful position your uncle has waiting for you in his shipyard. He seems to think the Academy trained you especially for his needs. He was certainly enthusiastic about what it

had done for your physical development. He'll think so all the more when he sees your strenuous dancing to-night."

"My uncle will have to find some other designer for the place," said Geff slowly.

"What! Not going to accept it? What could you have better? You don't mean you're going to loaf just because you can afford to?"

"No, I've got a job all right. I'm going to stay in the Service if I can."

"Raff, are you in earnest?" cried Blake, in wonder and delight. "I am so glad. What made you decide to do that when you've said a hundred times that you'd get rid of your uniform the first minute you were free at the end of this cruise?"

"I did n't know I was going to get so fond of the life, Blake. Nobody who ever knew me can help seeing what the training here has done for me. Somehow I can't imagine myself going back now to any other existence and getting out of touch with all the class — and you in particular. Now we can keep step together and

perhaps we'll both be admirals together some day."

And Lindsay and Millie, turning around, caught sight of two midshipmen shaking each other's hands as if they never meant to stop.

THE END

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